

# COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW

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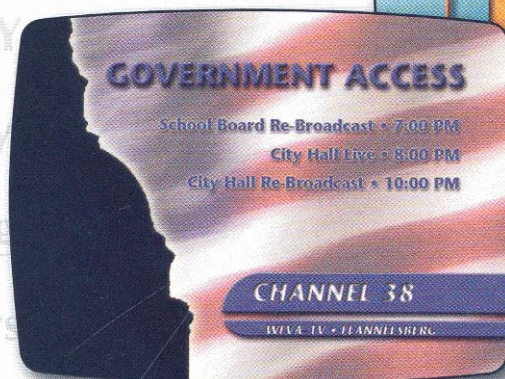
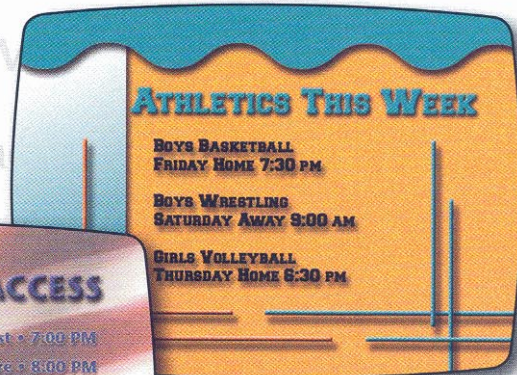
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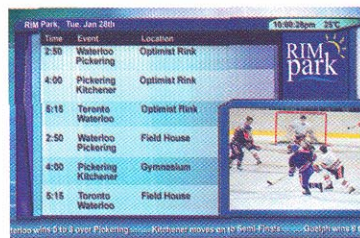
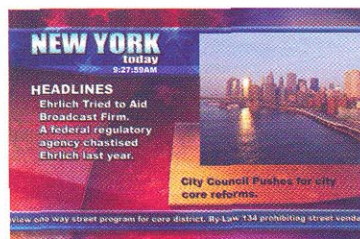
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*"I want the latest city  
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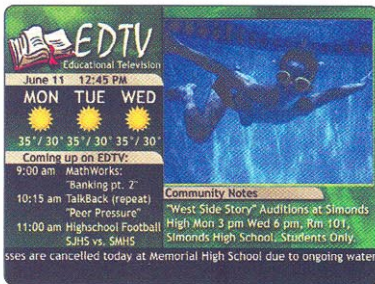
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"Peer Pressure"

11:00 am Highschool Football  
SJHS vs. SMHS

Community Notes:  
"West Side Story" Auditions at Simonds High Mon 3 pm Wed 6 pm, Rm 101, Simonds High School. Students Only.

Classes are cancelled today at Memorial High School due to ongoing water



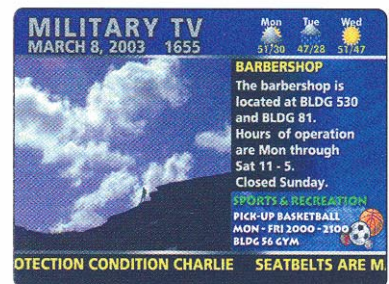
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Recycling Reminder:  
Paper and cardboard are collected this week.

Mon	Tue	Wed
51/30	47/28	51/47

Freeburg Lung Assoc. Needs Volunteers  
Help plan events, pick up donated product, set-up events, and more! Call 888-888-8888.

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MARCH 8, 2003 1655

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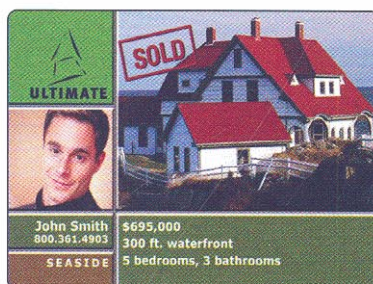


**Summer Camp registration now open!**  
City Hall: Monday - Thursday 1-4 p.m.

Swimming Lessons  
Horseback Riding  
Canoeing  
and more...

High School Fund Raiser  
Bake Sale this Sunday  
Come one come all!

Community Note:  
No recycling pickup Monday



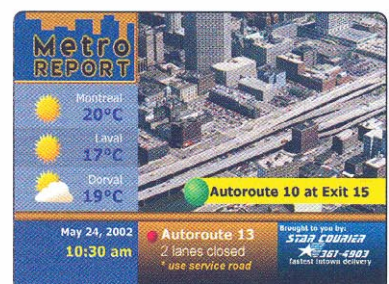
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WINTER 2003-2004  
VOLUME 26, NUMBER 4

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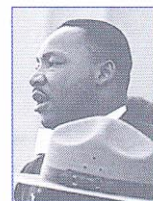
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**On the Cover:** In 1983, 50 corporations controlled the vast majority of all news media in the U.S., according to Ben H. Bagdikian in the first edition of his book, *THE MEDIA MONOPOLY*, Beacon Press. By 2000, the number had fallen to six (*THE MEDIA MONOPOLY*, sixth edition). Since then, the scope of mergers has expanded to include new media like the Internet, and major distribution companies like Comcast Corp. On the cover, we have listed the 50 corporations from 1983 and highlighted the top seven media corporations in 2003 based on ownership of media outlets and content, and on annual net revenues. Cover design by Tim Goodwin.



*Veronica Hunter and Ruud de Bruijn*

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*Veronica Hunter en Ruud de Bruijn*

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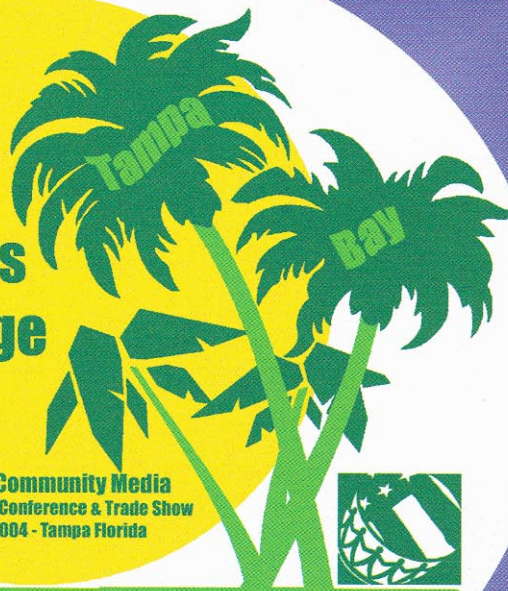
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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# *The Importance of Being PEG*

BY BUNNIE RIEDEL

Over the course of a week and a half, the Alliance office received nine requests for assistance from communities around the country. The issues included satellite, unionization, franchising, free speech and resources for adult learners and funding. Most of the people I spoke to had either been referred to us or found us by searching the web. These requests for specific assistance did not include the many other requests for publications, member assistance, conference and Hometown Video Festival information, etc.

During that same week and a half I gave three newspaper interviews and one radio interview. The topics ranged from free speech to emerging technology to media consolidation. The contacts we receive and the issues people want to discuss and receive information on, continue to tell me that Public, Educational and Government (PEG) access is growing throughout this country. There's an energetic pursuit of this medium in practically every community across America. It is an exciting time for PEG and all who are involved in it!

It is no accident that this interest in PEG coincides with the continuing consolidation and deregulation of media. There is a direct corollary between the relentless collapse of diverse voices in mainstream media and a growing hunger for alternative media.

The partnerships we have been able to forge over the past few years between the Alliance and representatives of local government (National League of Cities, National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, National Conference of Mayors, etc.) have proven to me that more and more local governments are understanding the importance of PEG to the well-being of their communities. I also hear more and more government representatives express disdain for the bullying tactics of the telecommunications industry (whether telephone or cable). I think we will see this trend grow as long as the telecommunications

industry continues its cultural attitude of "entitlement."

Interestingly enough, there also seems to be a governmental "grassroots" trickle-up movement afoot. While Congress and the Federal Communications Commission have been on a manic crusade to deregulate and remove control from local government for quite some time, I have recently witnessed Congressional offices (both Republican and Democrat) react negatively, even angrily, to the arrogance of the media giants. And I have watched as various offices have heard their constituents loud and clear and miraculously advocated on our behalf (at times doing complete reversals on previously held positions).

While this has energized many and given us hope, the challenges seem to multiply. How do we continue to make sure that PEG access will thrive and grow? How do minimize our defeats? How do we maximize our strengths?

So much of this is not in the hands of the Alliance national office or the purview of any one organization or movement. Most of the responsibility comes back to you at the grassroots level. When you are active in the community, when you are focusing on your mission, when you are on a first-name basis with your local elected officials, you are contributing to the health and well being of PEG throughout the country and to the message of "media democracy" for all. You are leading the movement for media reform every time you show up for work or volunteer at the access center or live-feed county council meetings.

From the national perspective, I encounter your work every day. I can't tell you how many times I have had Congressional members mention your access centers or say that they had seen access programming when back in their districts. Every time I am able to make that connection with House or Senate members we get just a little bit stronger.

The mission of PEG access is not limited to television. Over 30 years, the PEG

community has provided a successful paradigm for all forms of media, whether it is the Internet, radio, film, etc. The notion of setting something aside for the general public to participate in, and providing the general public with educational and democratic options, is no longer an experimental idea, it is a proven model.

I know that PEG is frequently marginalized, not just by our challengers, but also very often by our "friends." I get quite irritated at the marginalization because it is unfair to you and frankly it's just plain ignorant. What I do find amusing about these snipes and attacks is more times than not the snipers and attackers are trying to figure out how to take what we have (channels, money, etc.) I can't count the times I've had a big-shot producer sitting in my office pitching a four-hour-a-day, five-day-a-week block of programming that is going to "put access on the map." Then there's the computing club that wants our franchise fees to open an Internet café. And my personal favorite is how many times Public Broadcasting has made a run at our channels. Add to these the various Washington telecommunications policy tanks and consumer groups who've suddenly decided they are going to teach us how to negotiate franchise agreements! While the latter may not necessarily be after our money, they create these paper schemes in order to access the largess of national foundation grants.

Your success in creating a medium that educates, provides opportunity for democratic engagement and a platform for free speech, has put you at the forefront of the media democracy movement and provides a powerful example for others to follow. You should be very, very proud of yourself!

*Bunnie Riedel is executive director of the Alliance for Community Media. Contact her at [briedel@alliancecm.org](mailto:briedel@alliancecm.org)*



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## 'Talk Amongst Yourselves...'

Information, resources, networking and national office announcements are available day or night. The Alliance hosts three listservs to help you:

The ACCESS FORUM list is open to anyone interested in community access. To sign-up, interested persons should send a message to: [access-forum-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org](mailto:access-forum-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org).

The ALLIANCE ANNOUNCE list is open only to members of the Alliance for Community Media. Members should send a request to: [alliance-announce-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org](mailto:alliance-announce-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org).

To subscribe to the Alliances' EQUAL OPPORTUNITY list, send an email to [alliance-eo-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org](mailto:alliance-eo-subscribe@lists.alliancecm.org). After subscribing you may write messages to: [alliance-eo@lists.alliancecm.org](mailto:alliance-eo@lists.alliancecm.org)

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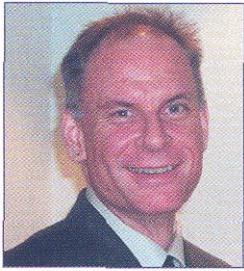
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# Are You Being Served?

BY BRIAN WILSON

There is a well circulated story about Federal Communications Commission Chairman Powell on the eve of his appointment to his new role, waiting for the Angel of Public Interest to descend and enlighten him. The angel never arrived he said. It's a little like the story of the man who stayed in his home during the flood because God would protect him. Chairman Powell failed to embrace his new appointment to be that of the Guardian Angel of Public Interest. And recently, in reference to the growing public concern over media consolidation, he responded that he didn't understand what the concern was about, after all, for years there were only three networks.

What Chairman Powell has failed to recognize is that for decades, while there may have been only three major television networks, the networks themselves were limited to the number of owned-and-operated stations they had and that the bulk of those "networks" were local affiliates, each owned by someone else, each with a local news division, local sports, educational and public service programming. Further, the chairman forgot to mention that the FCC and federal government, in their infinite wisdom, recognized that there needed to be an outlet for public programming without commercial interests. Hence the creation of PBS. Who knew it would become, in part, the syndicated programming outlet for the BBC. So all of this begs the question, why isn't Chairman Powell asking the American public, "Are you being served?"

This past year, FCC Commissioners Adelstein and Copps certainly were asking that question by hosting a number of public hearings and forums across the nation. And the response was overwhelming, creating a grassroots movement to reshape media and certainly fight back the incoming tide of media consolidation. And following a summer of "unrest," flying in the face of public opposition and over two million public comments, the FCC raised the bar on media ownership in favor of business, with only Adelstein

*And so Chairman Powell is still like the devout believer in the flood waiting for God to save him, and when faced with his maker, he asks, why wasn't I saved? Where is the Angel of Public Interest?*

and Copps voting against it.

In a January 19 article in *Cableworld*, writer Steve Effros predicted that when Congress returned to Washington, its focus would be the fight over media consolidation and first up, ownership caps. And he was right as Congress decided to accept the White House compromise between the old and the new and stipulate for 39 percent, instead of 35 percent. After all this wasn't the FCC's 45 percent, but it still allowed CBS and Fox to keep some properties rather than to have to shed them.

Recently, in an effort to appear "politically correct," Chairman Powell began hosting his own set of hearings to hear what the public has to say about its interests. Was it just by accident he started in the hometown of Clear Channel?

Mr. Effros continued his look into the crystal ball and further predicted that the media concentration theme will continue throughout this year, allowing those concerned to raise the issue. Digital cable carriage rules are due to come up before the FCC, as well as Congress. Then there is debate over localism, especially with Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of Direct TV. And Diane Mermigas in *TVWeek*, January 5, said, "Media companies are bracing for better days and bigger deals in 2004. The bottom line is another wave of consolidation transactions making the big even bigger is a no brainer." So I guess we need to brace ourselves as well.

But I started this column by asking, are you being served? Apparently not. Martha Wallner wrote for the Media Alliance, referring to the FCC vote to raise the ownership cap, "this was not the first FCC proceeding to favor big business and media consolidation, but it was the first,

in many years, to be met by a massive grassroots response. According to Senator John McCain, chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, which oversees the FCC, 'this sparked more interest than any issue I've seen that wasn't organized by a huge lobby.'" And Ms. Wallner goes further to explore how the concept of public interest has been morphed into consumer interest or "efficient marketplace." This dynamic shift signifies the change in political power between public and consumer/corporate domination of the process.<sup>1</sup>

As always I look forward to what the contributors in this issue of *CMR* have to share. I was thrilled to learn that even in the Clear Channel hometown, the general public was not afraid to come forward and stake its claim to the "public airwaves." And so Chairman Powell is still like the devout believer in the flood waiting for god to save him, and when faced with his maker, he asks, why wasn't I saved? Where is the Angel of Public Interest? Well Chairman Powell, you heard from hundreds of the angel's messengers in San Francisco last April, and thousands more in communities across the country. You heard from them as they gathered in Madison last November and again last week. So as God answered the man, we say to you Mr. Chairman, "how many messages do you need?"

<sup>1</sup> What the FCC is going on? Martha Wallner, Media Alliance, October, 2003

Brian Wilson is chair of the Alliance for Community Media and a former PEG ED and currently a public policy, planning and compliance analyst for the City and County of San Francisco.



# New BA Degree in Community Media and Technology at UMass Boston

BY FRED JOHNSON

The University of Massachusetts Community Media and Technology Program will begin offering a Bachelor of Arts degree in community media and technology. The program is part of the College of Public and Community Service [CPCS] at UMass Boston, a college founded on a vision of activist education and learning in pursuit of social justice. The CMT Program's educational approach is grounded in the strong democratic philosophies of social theorist and educators such as Paulo Freire, John Dewey and Antonio Gramsci, who many in the cable access world will find familiar.

The core of the program is a self-paced, competency-based, outcome-oriented curriculum in which prior learning is validated and collaborative projects are encouraged. Students are encouraged to become socially and politically active through partnerships with activists, community media and technology organizations, non-profit organizations, labor unions and others. Because curriculum is competency-based, academic credit is awarded for prior learning and independent, project-based learning initiatives taking place in community organizations. There is also a free-standing certificate in community media, online, through a web-based curriculum.

The CPCS Community Media and Technology Program is positioned to play a unique role in broadening the dialogue in community media and technology, as well as providing research, professional development and training. One critical area in which faculty and stu-

dents will concentrate is the proliferation of "place-based" media and communications initiatives now coming into existence globally in response to media globalization. The CMT Program will undertake research and convene seminars that encourage common language and collaborations in the area of policy forma-



tion and organizing among these diverse efforts.

**The Curriculum.** The Community Media and Technology degree is a liberal arts baccalaureate degree with a career focus. The CPCS curriculum is a competency-based, developmental curriculum comprised of four levels. To earn a baccalaureate degree, students must complete 120 credits. Work in the CMT major accounts for 30 credit hours.

Directly related to the new major are the CPCS "Core Knowledge and Skills" requirements, which include a competency in Media Literacy, as well as more indirectly related competencies in Exploring Culture, Exploring Community, and Public and Community Action.

Learning activities include History of Mass Communication, Networked Communication, Analyzing Media, Media and Community Building, Writing for Media, Production, Media/Technology Policy, Developing a Media/Technology Strategy, and Implementing a Media/Technology Strategy.

For details on the CMT program at UMass Boston, contact Fred Johnson at 617.287.7174, or at fred.johnson@umb.edu



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As I stepped out of the November, zero degree wind chill in Madison, Wisconsin, I was confronted with 1,500 warm bodies crammed into an auditorium at the University who had gathered for the 2003 *Free Press National Conference on Media Reform*. I was overwhelmed. I realized, maybe truly for the first time, that we—PEG access activists—were part of a much larger movement to address corporate media domination of voices and information in our communities. People had come from all over the country, from all different perspectives, to seriously examine critical issues threatening the free marketplace of ideas that is a taproot of the American democratic system.

And what was the issue creating this critical mass of activism? Vertical and horizontal ownership of media and communications outlets by fewer and fewer mega-corporations. The lines are quickly disappearing between distribution and content, between news and entertainment, between national and international media policy decisions, between “public domain” and copyright infringement, between news reporting and propaganda. This consolidation is reaching levels and impacting areas never before considered.

## media consolidation media reform

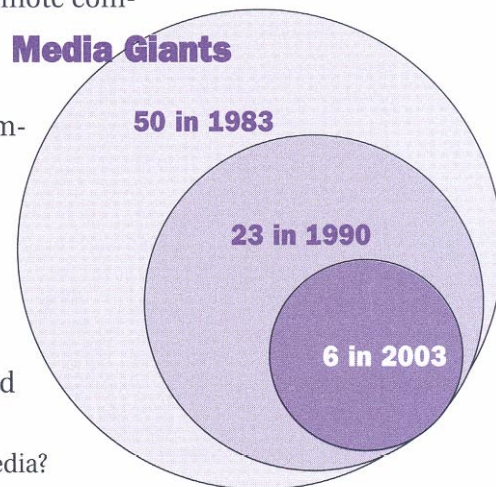
But, as FCC Commissioner Michael Copps says, the public finally gets it. And the general public—along with a variety of interest groups—is responding with an unanticipated outcry that has taken even the most seasoned politicians and policymakers off guard.

The media reform conference helped me connect the dots among the different aspects of concentration of media ownership. The *CMR* Editorial Board and I hope that this *CMR* will help you connect the dots and better understand how the mission and purpose of our access work ties so closely to others who are activating to ensure that people, as individuals, have access to communications technology and the diversity of information and voices necessary to have meaningful discourse so fundamental to democracy. This edition presents a wide range of media concentration issues and some perspectives about how community access television fits within the broader context of media reform. It's a sampling, however. We have also included websites, books and other resources for you to pursue.

So, what can we do...we can “Seize the Moment”<sup>1</sup>, use and promote community access as a model for media reform, and leverage franchise renewal processes as a way for communities to organize around broader issues of local control, diversity of voices, and community access to communications technology.

In closing, I would like to thank the contributing authors and the *CMR* Editorial Board, all of whom volunteered their time and expertise for this *CMR*. Special thanks go to Rebecca Gibbons, who provided many hours of valuable research and support, and *CMR* Managing Editor Tim Goodwin, who counseled and consoled me along the way.

<sup>1</sup> *In These Times*, Nov. 17, 2003, by Susan Douglas, Dawn of a New Media?



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*Julie S. Omelchuck is the assistant director for the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission in Portland, Oregon. She began her media activism in the early 1980s while attending Journalism school at the University of Montana. She worked at the Alliance national office for three years and has served on the Alliance National Board.*



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# Michael Copps: A Protector of the Marketplace of Ideas

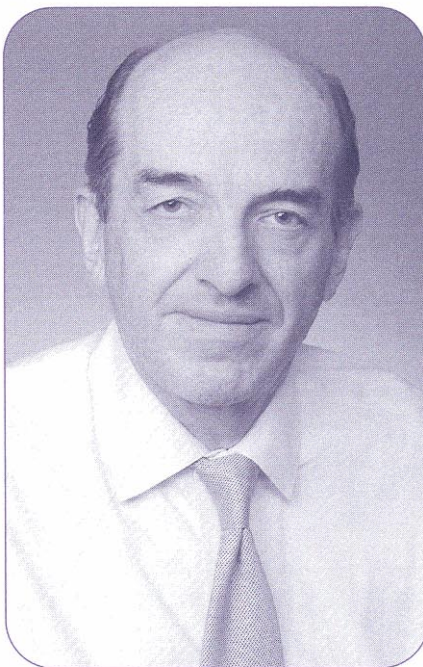
FCC Commissioner **Michael Copps** has become a champion for bringing back localism, diversity and competition to the federal decision-making process regarding media consolidation. Unfortunately he is in the minority. The FCC continues to favor more corporations controlling more media, evidenced by its recent attempt to allow a single corporation to own TV stations that reach 45 percent of U.S. households and permit common ownership of TV stations and newspapers in the vast majority of local markets.

Following is a summary of a COMMUNITY MEDIA REVIEW interview with the Commissioner on September 25, 2003, in Washington, DC. CMR also drew on Copps' keynote remarks at the 2003 National Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors Conference and his panel presentation at the National Conference on Media Reform in November 2003 to provide a more comprehensive overview of the topics discussed.

**CMR:** What do you think elevated the media consolidation issue to a national debate?

**MC:** It was grassroots action. A lot of people in Washington, DC believed the grassroots movement would splinter and fracture, but it didn't. They stayed together; they went to court together; they went to Congress together; they got action in both Houses; and they are still together. This is a grassroots issue and a bi-partisan issue. Industry and big media lobbies in Washington, DC. But Congress went home over summer break and heard from their communities. The man on the street gets it. Congress came back angry about the process and responding to its constituents. Estimated conservatively—2.3 million Americans commented on the FCC rule. The issue is here to stay.

**CMR:** What do you see as the relevance of community media in the current environment of media consolidation and cross ownership?



**MC:** Community media is relevant in a couple specific ways. Community media has kept the media consolidation issue alive. Big media is not reporting on media consolidations and the related impacts on our communities and our ability to use technology to communicate openly and freely. Initially, there was virtually no network coverage of the issue until the networks were shamed into some two-minute spots. The mainstream media coverage was nothing like it should be. Big media should be running stories about the town meetings and investigating the impact that media consolidation has on our democracy. But it's been alternative media outlets covering those stories.

Community media also plays a role by keeping localism and diversity alive. Folks working in local community media are leading by example. They reflect and practice the values of localism and diversity that the FCC and Congress are supposed to protect.

**CMR:** How do you see the "localism" issue playing itself out at the FCC?

**MC:** Localism needs to become the direct

focus of my colleagues at the FCC. First, we need to develop a record and find out if people really think the public interest is being served by the current lay of the land, media and program wise. Then relate it to a real world regulatory process like radio and television license renewals. The FCC should then use that record to make its decisions on license renewals. I believe if we build a solid record, the entire FCC would take the initiative to support localism and diversity.

Another aspect of localism is in the regulatory structure. The FCC Chairman seems to be headed toward national regulation and away from state and local regulatory structures. I'm interested in preserving localism in the regulatory structures as well.

**CMR:** Can we ever hope to have support for a full range of public interest benefits across all different forms of electronic media transmission technologies—from satellite (especially DBS) to broadcast (radio and TV) to cable TV to broadband Internet to wireless transmission?

**MC:** My whole direction is to encourage diversity by using all of those outlets. I believe the FCC is mandated by the law to do that. To a great extent, and through community media's efforts, we've secured public interest set-asides on cable TV and DBS. The Commission can look at new ways to preserve diversity and encourage multiple sources of information on other technologies. I'm trying to tee up some of these questions in the context of the transition to digital TV. Previous work of a Presidential panel of industry and consumer groups resulted in about nine ideas about public interest obligations of DTV. I'm trying to dust off those ideas. The FCC Chairman has done a lot of good things to encourage the transition to DTV but there is a big gap between what commercial interests can do with the technology and about what the public interest obligations should be.

Unfortunately, the FCC has been making discrete decisions that are moving in the wrong direction for localism,



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diversity and competition. In a time when we have so many important technologies, that can open so many doors and provide people access to so many things that enhance democratic dialogue and enrich our communities, the FCC has moved toward allowing a few big companies to own the whole ball of wax: local TV stations, newspapers, production studios, cable companies, Internet access—all of these new liberating technologies. What's the result when one group has control over product and distribution? MONOPOLY. Concentration and closed access are breathing down the necks of the Internet. That once wonderful open and free system is under siege too.

**CMR:** One of the barriers to localism and diversity of voices in media relates more to funding than pure capacity. For example, on DBS there is a capacity setaside but it's an unfunded mandate of sorts in that the local PEG programmers have to pay for the time and the technology to get programming on the satellite. As a result, the promise of localism and diversity has not been fulfilled on satellite TV.

**MC:** I'm a big believer in industry contributions for bandwidth and funding for PEG access channels. I'm worried about an industry trend of walking away from these commitments. They are in the statute and in the best interest of our citizens to retain and grow these channels. The more media consolidation, the more essential the local channels become if we are going to keep localism and diversity.

**CMR:** What suggestions do you have for community access and local media advocates to better influence federal decision-making on media concentration issues?

**MC:** The FCC is making a little bit of progress but community media advocates

really need to energize the debate with Congress.

Local advocates must build a record on what alternative and community media has done: Collect and tell your local stories. Secondly, figure out new and innovative ways to support this initiative. Focus strategies toward the future instead of criticizing past actions.

And also, continue to use local, alternative media outlets to raise questions about media ownership. Many communities have the tools and the channels to elevate discussion about the issues. We need a national dialogue on this issue and community media can play a big role in providing people with balanced information. As we've seen, when people become aware of the issues, there's no question about how important they think this issue is. They want the FCC or Congress to do something to protect their airwaves. The American people are perfectly capable of making up their own minds.

The most important thing to remember about the FCC fight is that this is no longer the FCC fight but America's fight. It's a critical matter of public policy. I believe the issue is keyed up now where it's approaching critical mass with potentially huge public support. But this battle is far from over. We've got the momentum. Truth and justice—we have going for us. Still it's an uphill battle—a work in progress. The future is now, seize the day, don't let this issue drift and fade. I think we can be successful because we have the commitment, the dedication and desire to do it.

*This article was compiled by Bunnie Riedel, executive director, Alliance for Community Media, and CMR Guest Editor-in-Chief Julie S. Omelchuck, assistant director, Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission, Portland, OR.*

## The Need to Rebuild a Public Interest Movement

"The industry knows what it wants and has an agenda. We need to create an agenda and reframe the issues to reflect a democratic and public interest perspective that we want. Industry is opposed to ISP choice; opposed to privacy policy so they can collect the data that is at the heart of the interactive advertising system; opposed to policies on intellectual property that would allow the public interest to retain some control over information; opposed to policies that would allow communities to control some of their own bandwidth, etc. We need to develop strategies and act early to create public policy. The whole idea of localism was undermined from the beginning. Let's not repeat that mistake again. We need to rebuild a public interest movement. Focus on emerging infrastructure to see how it supports community interests. What we need to do: [we] can't let cable and telecom companies determine how our digital destiny evolves. Ask how much capacity do you intend to provide, what are your business models. Pose questions and demand public input and access."

*—Jeff Chester, Executive Director, Center for Digital Democracy, addressing the National Conference on Media Reform in Madison, Wisconsin, November 2003*

"I think people have been working on this separately in a segmented fashion for a long time—local cable access, open access on cable systems, open access for internet providers, minority ownership. So the ideas have been there—we just need to unify the platform now that the ownership issue has raised the interest and visibility."

*—Gene Kimmelman, Director, Consumers Union, addressing the National Conference on Media Reform in Madison, Wisconsin, November 2003*

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# Grassroots Media Steps in Where Corporations Fear to Tread

BY MARTHA WALLNER

San Francisco's skies were a brilliant blue on Saturday, April 26, 2003, and yet over 500 people chose to spend the day inside, attending a public hearing at city hall on media concentration and the Federal Communications Commission's ownership rules. With the exception of independent commercial broadcaster KRON, a former ABC affiliate, no commercial media covered the hearing. Alternative media played a critical role in ensuring the community heard about this important issue.

This hearing, like the others held across the country, drew a packed audience and provided a forum for the range of perspectives that had been rendered inaudible and invisible by mainstream media coverage. In fact, prior to the hearing, Media Alliance, the nonprofit that organized the hearing, contracted with a professional publicist with a great track record in generating coverage of events. Despite this, the press release and press briefing received a chilly reception from mainstream outlets.

The media response, or lack of response in this case, demonstrates the mainstream media's blatant conflict of interest in covering media policy. Via-com/CBS, News Corp/Fox, GE/NBC, and Disney/ABC and the nation's leading newspaper chains have led the efforts to loosen the FCC's ownership rules. A joint statement filed with the FCC by Fox, NBC and Viacom, contends, "There is no longer any public interest served by the commission's ownership rules." Clearly, the media gatekeepers determined that coverage of the public opposition to their view was not in their interest.

The word did get out due to the tremendous response from alternative media. In the weeks before the hearing, *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*, an independent daily, ran an article and an editorial, and the Pacific News Service, serving ethnic media throughout the state, provided a news analysis on consolidation. The day before the hearing,

*It's important to remember that while fighting against corporate media consolidation, we must also defend and expand the policies that protect independent, non-commercial media.*

Working Assets Radio featured FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein on the San Francisco School Board's station KALW. Community radio broadcasters, KPOO and KPFA, provided gavel-to-gavel, live coverage of the hearing throughout the Bay Area and, via KFCF, in the Central Valley.

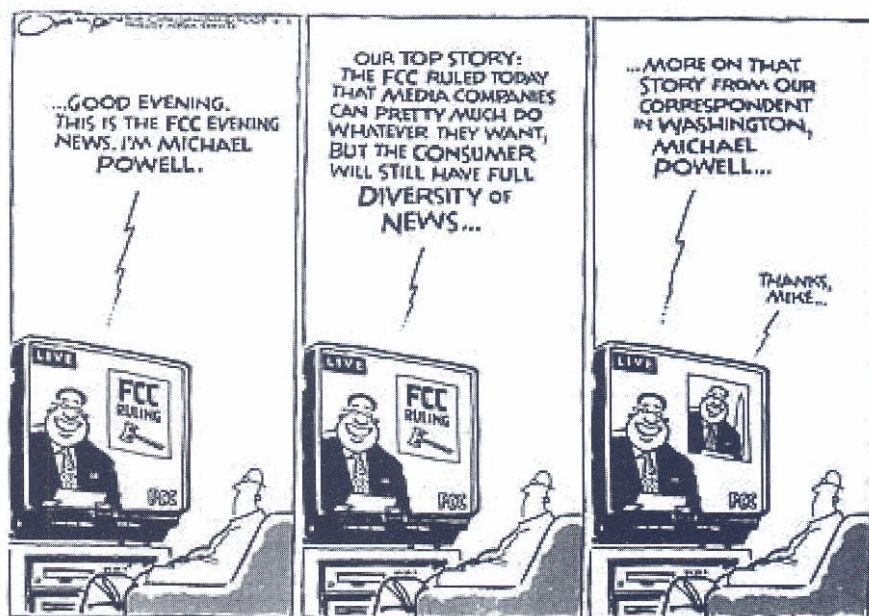
San Francisco's activist web portal Indymedia, linked with independent media centers throughout the world, provided streaming audio on the internet. WorldLink TV, available on direct broadcast satellite television (as part of the mandated DBS set-asides for non-commercial programming), produced a two-hour special on consolidation, referenc-

ing the San Francisco hearings. Public access television producers provided coverage on EATV, the educational access channel, Access SF, the public access channel, Berkeley Community Media, and Cable Channel 26, serving Marin County just North of San Francisco.

The hearing was kicked off by Matt Gonzalez, president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. FCC Commissioner Adelstein and Ben Bagdikian, former Dean of U.C. Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, spoke, followed by three panels and three public comment periods.

Alternative media's showing in this case illustrates the powerful role that grassroots organizing and alternative media can play in covering important issues largely ignored by commercial media. It's important to remember that while fighting against corporate media consolidation, we must also defend and expand the policies that protect independent, non-commercial media.

*Martha Wallner is a long-time media activist and one of the organizers of the public hearing on media consolidation in San Francisco. Her email address is [Marthaw@lmi.net](mailto:Marthaw@lmi.net).*



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# Access Tucson Builds Awareness, Creates Dialog with Visit by *Democracy Now!*'s Amy Goodman

BY SAM BEHREND

As mainstream media companies move further away from providing alternative and diverse viewpoints critical to our communities and to democracy, Public access centers have bolstered their role as facilitators and distributors of independently-produced and community works. Access Tucson has used two very important sources of such work, Free Speech TV (FSTV) and one of its independently-produced programs, *Democracy Now!*, to not only promote community dialog on important issues, but also to boost awareness of the access channels as a critical, local information source.

FSTV, while not necessarily programming produced by a community member, is curated, 'best-of' independent and public access programming. The Alliance, formerly NFLCP, tried for years to create a similar circulation of video using bicycling and cataloging techniques. In 1985, Access Tucson and six other centers formed the Seven Cities Project in which each of the centers curated a diverse group of locally produced programs and sent them around to the other six centers. Alliance Regions have expended time and energy creating catalogs of local programming to encourage bicycling. These approaches did not have long-term success because of the difficulties inherent to them.

Free Speech TV was founded in 1995, but its roots extend back to *The 90's* public television show and *The 90's Channel* on cable television, both of which were founded in 1989. From 1995 to 2000, FSTV provided weekly programming via videotape to a network of 50 community cable channels. In 2000, FSTV realized its goal of launching the first national progressive television network when it was awarded a full-time satellite channel on DISH Network as a result of the Federal Communications Commission



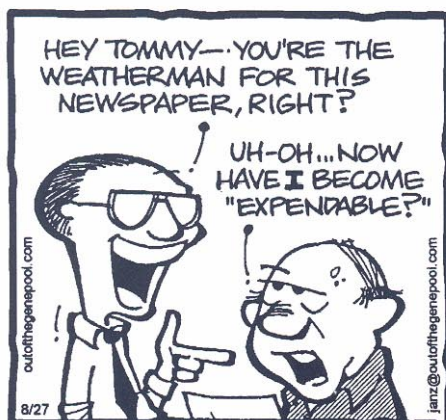
policy to set aside a small percentage of satellite channels for public interest use. Access centers can encourage local producers to submit their work to FSTV for distribution.

*Democracy Now!* is a centerpiece, weekday news program on FSTV hosted by award-winning journalists Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez. Access Tucson and KXCI community radio both carry the program. In October 2003, Access Tucson used the popularity of Goodman to promote the access channels to a broader community radio audience. Access Tucson and KXCI co-sponsored Goodman for a speaking

engagement in Tucson. With little advance notice and promotion primarily bookending the *Democracy Now!* program on KXCI and Access Tucson, a capacity crowd of 2,400 showed up. Most of the attendees knew *Democracy Now!* from radio and relatively few were aware that the program was also carried on public access television. During her presentation, Goodman promoted the value of community television and radio.

Working in partnership with the community radio station brought many hundreds of new viewers to Access Tucson. These are viewers who will take action to advance and protect public access when it is challenged. These fans are Access Tucson's newest, best friends.

Sam Behrend is executive director of Access Tucson in Tucson, Arizona. He can be contacted at [sam@accesstucson.org](mailto:sam@accesstucson.org). Free Speech TV can be reached via the Internet at <http://www.freespeech.org>. *DEMOCRACY NOW!* is available at <http://www.democracynow.org>.



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# Tripping Up Big Media

*One of the strangest Left-Right coalitions in recent memory has challenged a free-market FCC. What's the glue that holds it together?*

BY GAL BECKERMAN

The angels of the public interest, with large pink wings and glittering halos, descended on Michael Powell this fall, five years after he had, somewhat sarcastically, first invoked them.

That was back in April 1998, when Powell was speaking to a Las Vegas gathering of lawyers. Only a few months had passed since his appointment to one of the five spots on the Federal Communications Commission, and the new commissioner had been invited to speak about a longstanding and contentious issue: Was it the FCC's responsibility to keep the media working toward the public good? Powell made clear that he placed his faith in the invisible hand of the market: the business of the FCC, he said, was to resolve "matters that predominantly involve the competing interests of industry" and not some vague "public interest." The FCC had no role in deciding whether to give free airtime to presidential candidates, for example, or in forcing television channels to carry educational or children's programming. "Even if what is portrayed on television encourages or perpetuates some societal problem, we must be careful in invoking our regulatory powers," Powell insisted.

To highlight the point, Powell used biblical imagery. "The night after I was sworn in, I waited for a visit from the angel of the public interest," Powell said. "I waited all night, but she did not come. And, in fact, five months into this job, I still have had no divine awakening."

September 4, 2003 the angels finally arrived.

Fifteen women dressed entirely in fluorescent pink and spreading frilly wings emblazoned with the words "Free Speech" stood on the sidewalk outside the large glass doors of the FCC. They banged on bongos and shouted chants, unfurling a large pink scroll containing their demands: full repeal of the new rules that Michael Powell had just shep-

herded into existence.

By this time, Powell had become FCC chairman and had overseen the biggest relaxation of media ownership rules in over 30 years (see "Powell's Rules," below). But the day before, a federal appeals court in Philadelphia had granted an emergency stay barring the FCC from putting his new rules into effect. The court gave as one of its reasons "the magnitude of this matter and the public's interest in reaching the proper resolution." So the angels were celebrating, and they were not alone.

The massive public response to the rule changes, in fact, had been unprecedented. For months before and after the new rules were announced on June 2, opposition had been loud, passionate, and active. Hundreds of thousands of comments were sent to the FCC, almost all in opposition. It was the heaviest outpouring of public sentiment the commission had ever experienced.

Even more striking was the makeup of this opposition, what *The New York Times* called "an unusual alliance of liberal and conservative organizations." Together in the mix, along with Code Pink, the activists in angel wings, were the National Rifle Association, the National Organization for Women, the Parents Television Council (a conservative group focused on indecency in television), every major journalism association, labor groups like the Writers and Screen Actors Guilds, and a collection of liberal nonprofit organizations that had been focused on media issues for decades.

It is not every day that the ideological lines get redrawn over an issue, let alone an issue that had been destined to remain obscure and complex for all but telecommunications experts to debate. What's the glue that has held this unlikely coalition together?

Like everyone I talked to who was involved in the opposition to the FCC rules, Victoria Cunningham, national

coordinator for Code Pink, spoke of the intuitive understanding most people had of an issue that seems complex on the surface. Over and over, as I attempted to understand what it was that was holding together this diverse coalition, I heard the same phrase: "People just get it." And I heard this from groups both left and right. The oddest invitation Cunningham said she had received in the last few months was to appear on Oliver North's conservative radio talk show to debate the FCC issue. "And when we talked about that," she said, "we just couldn't say anything bad to each other."

Monsignor Francis J. Maniscalco, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Director of Communications, spoke like a weathered telecommunications professional about his opposition to the FCC's new rules. The bishops are concerned about the loss of religious shows, like Catholic mass on television—but also the loss of a time when, he says, in order for broadcasters to keep their licenses they had to "prove they were being responsive to the local community." The further consolidation of the media that would be spurred by the new FCC rules, he said, would only increase the lack of responsiveness to community needs. "We see the media as being very formational of people, formational of a culture, formational of people's attitudes," he said, "and if certain strains of community life are not on television they are, by that very reason, considered less important, less vital to society."

Even though he and the conference had always opposed media consolidation, Maniscalco said, until recently they felt they were working in a vacuum. When the monsignor began talking about the current effort, though, he visibly brightened. His eyebrows, which are red, lifted, and he rolled forward in his chair. "The consumption of media is a passive consumption, it is a passive act in itself," he said. "And it is a passive audience that has said, 'We just have to take what they



give us.' But interestingly enough, this seems to be something that has finally caught people's imagination, that they could make a difference in terms of turning back these rules and saying no, we don't see that as being very helpful to our situation."

Media industry insiders were taken by surprise at how fast these groups managed to come together and exercise political influence. In addition to the emergency stay issued by the Philadelphia federal appeals court on the day before Powell's six new rules were to go into effect, Congress has responded with zeal to their demands. Consider: on July 23, only a month after the rules were approved, the House of Representatives voted 400 to 21 to roll back the ownership cap to 35 percent. Then, on September 16, the coalition had an even greater success. The Senate used a parliamentary procedure, called a resolution of disapproval—used only once before in history—to pass a bill repealing all the new regulations. It passed 55 to 40, and was supported by 12 Republicans, and cosponsored, astonishingly, by none other than Trent Lott. Such quick legislative action has generated excitement, but it is unlikely that the coalition will find such easy victory in the future. The Senate bill must now face House Republican leaders who have vowed to prevent the measure from going to a vote, partly to keep this political hot potato away from the president during an election year. The court case that has put the new rules on hold, meanwhile, promises a complicated legal contest when it takes place next year.

But these challenges don't take away from what has been achieved. Such ideologically disparate groups rarely find common cause. As Powell himself has pointed out, the reasons behind most of these groups' opposition are parochial and narrow. The unions are worried that more consolidation will lead to fewer jobs; the left-leaning groups are still shivering from what they saw as nationalistic coverage of the war; groups like the Parents Television Council want less *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and more *Little House on the Prairie*. Yet there they were, at countless public hearings over the last half-year, the bishop sitting next to the gun lobbyist sitting next to a woman from NOW, all united around some common denominator.

What unites these groups, Andrew Schwartzman, president of the Media Access Project, told me, is that they all generally believe that the media are limited, and that this limitation comes from the fact that there is too much control in too few hands. This leads to a lack of diversity of voices, to programming that is out of touch with local concerns, to increasingly commercial and homogenized news and entertainment. And this is what has triggered people's passions. It is not the fear that their own voice won't echo loud enough, he said, but that further consolidation will produce media in which only the powerful few will be heard at all.

*What unites these groups, Andrew Schwartzman, president of the Media Access Project, told me, is that they all generally believe that the media are limited, and that this limitation comes from the fact that there is too much control in too few hands. This leads to a lack of diversity of voices, to programming that is out of touch with local concerns, to increasingly commercial and homogenized news and entertainment. And this is what has triggered people's passions.*

The 1980s saw a major crack in the idea that the public interest was the top priority for the FCC. President Reagan's FCC chairman, Mark Fowler, presided over the death of the Fairness Doctrine, which required broadcast stations to provide airtime for opposing voices in controversial matters of public importance. Then in 1996 Congress passed, and President Clinton signed, a major overhaul of U.S. telecommunications law, permitting greater media concentration. Radio was significantly deregulated, leading to the growth of companies such as Clear Channel, which now operates more than 1,200 stations in more than 300 markets. It was in that period that the national ownership cap for television stations went from 25 percent to 35 percent.

Such developments happened away from the public eye, in a place where only members of Congress and lobbyists roam. According to Celia Wexler, director and researcher for Common Cause, the nonpartisan citizens' lobby, those past fights were "very much inside the Beltway. It was very complicated, and there

were no groups able to tell the story in a way that really made people understand what was at stake. There were media reformers who understood, who wanted a discussion of the public-interest obligations of broadcasters. But it didn't really catch fire."

At a morning session on media issues at a Common Cause conference, I saw how dramatically the situation had changed. Seats to the event were in hot demand. Next to me an elderly couple sat clutching newspaper clippings, one of which was headlined new fcc rules sap diversity in media owners.

As with the liberals, there have always been conservative groups that have

opposed media deregulation, most notably the Catholic Church, but the message never resonated widely.

That, too, has changed. Take, for example, the Parents Television Council, an organization with 800,000 members that monitors indecency. The group regularly sends letters to the FCC when a show contains what they call "foul language" or racy subject matter. In August, L. Brent Bozell, the council's president, joined Gene Kimmelman of Consumers Union, a longtime advocate of media reform, in an editorial that was published in the *New York Daily News*, writing that in spite of their ideological differences they "agree that by opening the door to more media and newspaper consolidation, the FCC has endangered something that reaches far beyond traditional politics: It has undermined the community-oriented communications critical to our democracy."

Melissa Caldwell, director of research at the council, points out that the new ownership rules were a way for big media companies to buy up even more local sta-



tions. This is worrisome, she explained, because locally owned broadcast affiliates tend to be more responsive to community standards of decency. The council's surveys, Caldwell says, show that network-owned stations almost never preempt network shows, "whereas locally owned and operated stations were more likely to do so. We don't want to see the networks become even less responsive to community concerns than they already are."

By the end of September, with his rules in deep freeze, Powell, speaking to *The New York Times*, expressed exasperation with the effectiveness of the opposition. "Basically, people ran an outside political campaign against the commission," Powell was quoted as saying. "I've never seen that in six years."

By the beginning of 2003, a loose coalition was in place. And at that point, Powell's personality, of all things, began to play a galvanizing role. In pronouncement after pronouncement, he trumpeted the importance of these new rules—highlighted by his decision to vote on all of them in one shot. He insisted that their rewriting would be based purely on a scientific examination of the current broadcasting world.

It was true, as Powell claimed, that reexamining the rules was not his idea. The District of Columbia Court of Appeals, interpreting the 1996 Telecommunications Act, had ordered him to conduct a biennial assessment. But Powell had many chances to include the public in this review, and he did not. No public hearings were necessary, he said; the facts would do the talking, and would point to the rightness of his free-market convictions.

If Powell's refusal to hold public hearings galvanized the opposition in one direction, the desire of another commissioner, Michael J. Cops, to engage with the public on this issue also played a key role. Cops, one of the two Democrats on the FCC, was unhappy with Powell's insistence on keeping the issue within the Beltway. When Powell finally announced that the number of public hearings would be limited to one, Cops issued a statement that read like the complaints of the growing grassroots opposition. "At stake in this proceeding are our core values of localism, diversity, competition, and maintaining the multi-

plicity of voices and choices that undergird our marketplace of ideas and that sustain American democracy," he said.

Through the winter and early spring, Cops organized unofficial hearings around the country in collaboration with groups like the Writers Guild, earning the nickname Paul Revere in some quarters. As media reform groups searched for a wide range of witnesses to speak at these hearings, the coalition grew to include groups like the National Rifle Association and the National Organization for Woman. Out of the meetings came the first sense that this issue could resonate.

In the spring, after Powell refused to delay the June vote for further discussion, the FCC was flooded with calls and letters. Petitions were signed with hundreds of thousands of names and comments. Something was happening. Despite the scant press coverage, citizens were responding. The Internet helped to make this response immediate and numerous, mostly through an Internet-based public interest group called MoveOn.org, which had been an organizing force against the Iraq war, capable of turning out thousands upon thousands of signatures and donations in a matter of days. Now it turned its attention to media reform, and the result surprised even its organizers.

"We thought it was just kind of a weird issue because it's this wonky regulatory thing, it's not a typical MoveOn issue like stopping the drilling in the Arctic," said Eli Pariser, MoveOn's young national campaigns director. "After we heard from a critical mass of people we decided to pursue it and see what happened. And when we went out with our petition we got this amazing response."

A few days before the September 16 Senate vote on the resolution of disapproval, I accompanied lobbyists from Consumers Union and Free Press as they delivered a huge MoveOn petition. Lining one of the halls in the Hart Senate Office Building were stacks upon stacks of paper, 340,000 names in all. It was the quickest and largest turnover MoveOn had ever experienced, including its anti-war effort.

As the activists, young and in rumpled, ill-fitting suits, delivered these petitions to Senate aides, everyone was

struck by the fact that they were more than just names printed on paper, more than a rubber-stamp petition drive. Many of the statements seemed heartfelt. Sometimes they were only a line, "I want more diversity and freedom of speech," and sometimes long letters, taking up whole pages. People expressed their personal dissatisfaction with what they saw when they turned on the TV. But mostly, they expressed passion. It popped off the page. People in Batesville, Arkansas, and Tekamah, Nebraska, were angry. Media had become a political issue, as deeply felt as the economy, health care, or education. Senate Republicans and Democrats alike understood this. A few days later, they voted to repeal all the new regulations.

When I asked the coalition partners how long their alliance could last beyond the battle over the ownership rules, their answers were uniform: not long.

But on the question of what these groups' larger and long-term objectives were for the media, I did get some kind of consensus. At the most fundamental level, there is a demand for a forum, for a place where diverse ideas can be heard and contrasted. The ideal seemed to be media that better reflect America, with its diversity, its ideological contentiousness, its multitude of values and standards.

When I posed the problem of whether Monsignor Maniscalco could eventually agree to share airtime with all the groups in this coalition, groups like NOW with which he had fundamental and deep disagreements, Monsignor Maniscalco had a simple answer: "You could say that the goal is for the media to give us access so we can finally have a space to argue amongst ourselves."

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*Gal Beckerman is an assistant editor at the COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW, Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, New York, NY. This article is an excerpt and not the full article which originally appeared in the November/December 2003 issue of the Columbia Journalism Review. For the complete text, go to [www.cjr.org/issues/2003/6/media-beckerman.asp](http://www.cjr.org/issues/2003/6/media-beckerman.asp)*

For a list of organizations and groups allied against the rules proposed by the FCC, see pages 22 and 24.



# Minority Media: A Retrospective on the 40th Anniversary of the March on Washington

BY ANDREA L. TAYLOR, WITH NORRIS DICKARD

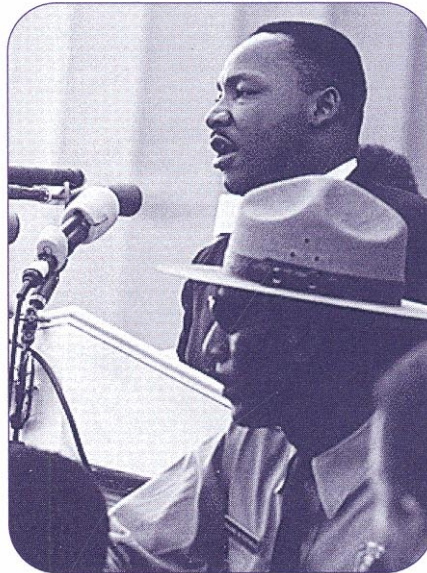
**O**n August 28, 1963, nearly 250,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC to urge passage of pending civil rights legislation. Among the marchers that day were Benton Foundation Chairman Charles Benton of Illinois and current Foundation President Andrea Taylor, then a high school student from West Virginia—individuals who didn't meet until the 1990s.

The event is remembered by most for the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s I Have a Dream speech, a clarion call for full inclusion in pursuit of the American dream. Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in voting, public accommodations and employment and gave a powerful boost to making the dream of Dr. King a reality. However, the law was no panacea, and civil rights activists continued to struggle on many fronts including the issue of minorities and the media.

Fast forward to 2003 and this year's heated debate about Federal Communications Commission rules that govern ownership of the nation's media to understand why the 40th anniversary of the March on Washington triggers reflections on the milestones and current conditions of minorities in the media—how we were portrayed, coverage of issues we cared about, and the extent of minority involvement in production and ownership.

## **A landmark case in Jackson, Mississippi**

In March 1964 Dr. Everett Parker and the United Church of Christ traveled to Jackson, Mississippi to examine the media. They discovered that although African-Americans constituted nearly half of the television audience, a local TV station ignored their concerns and blocked the national network feed of civil rights coverage or interviews with Dr. King. The NAACP and Parker challenged the station's license in a landmark case. The Federal Appeals Court overruled the FCC, which had refused to act, and vacat-



**Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. addresses the march on Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963.**

ed the license of WLBT-TV in Jackson for discrimination against African-Americans. The Court found that the station, by not airing issues of public importance, failed all of the citizens of Jackson.

Media activist Everett Parker later petitioned the FCC to introduce equal employment opportunity rules for the broadcasting industry. In 1978, at a time when minorities controlled less than one percent of the 8,500 commercial radio and television stations in the U.S., the FCC released a "Statement of Policy on Minority Ownership of Broadcast Facilities" addressing a lack of minority broadcast ownership in America.

During the 1960s the entertainment industry was severely criticized for the unflattering portrayal of minorities on television and in film. Sidney Poitier's Oscar Award for best actor in 1964 for *Lilies of the Field* was a milestone. Yet, when African Americans Denzel Washington and Halle Berry both won Oscars in 2002, the nation was reminded that in six decades of Academy Awards only three blacks (Hattie McDaniel, Sidney Poitier, and Louis Gossett, Jr.), two Asians (Miyoshi Umeki and Haing S. Ngor), one Puerto Rican (Rita Moreno), and one Chicano (half-Irish Anthony Quinn) had won

Oscars, for an average rate of slightly more than one award per decade prompting calls for Hollywood to be more inclusive.

## **FCC issues tax credits to foster diversity in the broadcast industry**

An effort to diversify programming in the broadcast industry allowed the FCC to issue hundreds of tax credits to broadcasters who sold their stations to parties "where minority ownership is in excess of 50 percent or controlling," before it was repealed by Congress in 1995 citing fraud and abuse. As a result more minorities became owners in the media industry and the marketplace was slightly more responsive to the needs of ethnic minorities.

Black Entertainment Television (BET), founded by Robert L. Johnson, was the first cable television network aimed at African-Americans during this period. Johnson sold BET to media giant Viacom in 1999 and it now reaches more than 65 million U.S. homes with programming and websites with an African-American slant. Other minority media pioneers entered the marketplace for radio, television, and news—expanding consumer choices and creating new concerns about ethnic Citizen Kanes.

## **An "information-age civil rights bill" is introduced**

Ethnic media, in places like California with nearly 17 million residents who self-identify as Hispanic, African-American or Asian American, reached 84 percent of the target audience in 2002 reports New California Media. Surveys also show that many prefer ethnic media to general market alternatives and this growth is generating new policy debates. An example is the proposed merger of Univision and Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation, the largest Spanish language broadcasters. Congressional Democrats, led by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), introduced The National Minority Media Opportunities Act, or so-called "information-age civil rights bill," to prevent "media mergers that would create monopolies" in broadcast markets serv-



# For the Record

## Organizations Opposed To Media Concentration

### Public Interest/Trade and Other Groups Opposed to Media Concentration

- ▲ American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)
- ▲ American Academy of Pediatrics [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)
- ▲ American Psychological Association [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- ▲ Children Now [www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)
- ▲ Chinese for Affirmative Action [www.caasf.org](http://www.caasf.org)
- ▲ Civil Rights Forum [www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/crforum.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/crforum.htm)
- ▲ CodePink, Women for Peace [www.codepink4peace.org](http://www.codepink4peace.org)
- ▲ Common Cause [www.common-cause.org](http://www.common-cause.org)
- ▲ Consumer Federation of America [www.consumerfed.org](http://www.consumerfed.org)
- ▲ Consumers Union [www.consumersunion.org](http://www.consumersunion.org)
- ▲ Council of Catholic Bishops [www.nccbuscc.org](http://www.nccbuscc.org)
- ▲ Department of Professional Employees, AFL-CIO [www.dpeaflcio.org/index.cfm](http://www.dpeaflcio.org/index.cfm)
- ▲ Family Research Council [www.frc.org](http://www.frc.org)
- ▲ Feminist Majority Foundation [www.feminist.org](http://www.feminist.org)
- ▲ Green Party [www.gp.org](http://www.gp.org)
- ▲ League of United Latin American Citizens [www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)
- ▲ MATCH (Mobilize Against Tobacco for Children's Health) [www.matchcoalition.com/](http://www.matchcoalition.com/)
- ▲ Medical Society of New Jersey [www.msnj.org](http://www.msnj.org)
- ▲ MoveOn.org, [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)
- ▲ National Association of Child Advocates, [www.childadvocacy.org](http://www.childadvocacy.org)
- ▲ National Organization for Women (NOW) [now.org/issues/media](http://now.org/issues/media)
- ▲ National PTA, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)
- ▲ National Rifle Association [www.nra.org](http://www.nra.org)
- ▲ Philadelphia Lesbian & Gay Task Force [www.op.net/plgtf/](http://www.op.net/plgtf/)
- ▲ Socially Responsible Investment Coalition (San Antonio) [www.flash.net/~sric/](http://www.flash.net/~sric/)

- ▲ Texas State Rifle Association [tsra.com/tsra\\_protests\\_fcc.htm](http://tsra.com/tsra_protests_fcc.htm)
- ▲ Traditional Values Coalition [www.traditionalvalues.org](http://www.traditionalvalues.org)
- ▲ United Church of Christ [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org)
- ▲ U.S. Catholic Bishops, [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)
- ▲ USPIRG [pirg.org/consumer/media/index.htm](http://pirg.org/consumer/media/index.htm)
- ▲ U.S. Small Business Administration [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)
- ▲ Wider Opportunities for Women [www.wowonline.org](http://www.wowonline.org)

### Media Critique and Information Resources

- ▲ Columbia Journalism Review [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org)
- ▲ Union for Democratic Communications [www.udc.org](http://www.udc.org)
- ▲ Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting [www.fair.org](http://www.fair.org)
- ▲ NOW with Bill Moyers (search: media) [www.pbs.org/now](http://www.pbs.org/now)
- ▲ ACTION Center [www.corporations.org/media](http://www.corporations.org/media)
- ▲ Capital Eye (search: media lobbying and contributions) [www.capitaleye.org](http://www.capitaleye.org)
- ▲ Advertising Age [www.adage.com](http://www.adage.com)
- ▲ Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility [www.cpsr.org](http://www.cpsr.org)
- ▲ Telecommunications Policy Research Conference [www.tprc.org](http://www.tprc.org)
- ▲ Digital Divide Network [www.digitaldividenetwork.org](http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org)
- ▲ Global Issues [www.globalissues.org](http://www.globalissues.org)
- ▲ Center for Public Integrity [www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org)
- ▲ Media for Democracy 2004 [www.mediafordemocracy.us](http://www.mediafordemocracy.us)
- ▲ Commercial Alert [www.commercialalert.org](http://www.commercialalert.org)
- ▲ Media Channel [www.mediachannel.org](http://www.mediachannel.org)
- ▲ Project Censored [www.projectcensored.org](http://www.projectcensored.org)
- ▲ Media Education Foundation [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)
- ▲ Institute for Public Accuracy [www.accuracy.org](http://www.accuracy.org)
- ▲ The Newspaper Guild [www.newsguild.org](http://www.newsguild.org)

ing minority language populations.

Recent studies confirm that people of color are consistently underrepresented among the nation's commercial broadcast owners, representing 3.8 percent in 2000, far below their estimated 33 percent representation in the U.S. population. Minority ownership is declining in the wake of the 1996 Telecommunications Act due in part to lenient ownership rules and media consolidation that limits competition, especially in radio. Since 1995, when the largest radio owner controlled 85 stations, individual radio station owners have declined by almost 25 percent. Today, Clear Channel, the largest radio conglomerate, owns over 1,200 stations.

### Challenge to the FCC ruling on media ownership is unprecedented

The FCC voted in early June 2003 to relax federal media ownership rules, permitting large conglomerates to buy more broadcast stations nationally and consolidate control over more newspaper and station combinations locally. This decision generated unprecedented public debate and has spawned legislative counter action and court challenges.

Just prior to the anniversary of the March on Washington, FCC Chairman Michael Powell announced the creation of a new Federal Advisory Committee on Diversity in the Digital Age. As deliberations on the new media ownership rules continue, the fact is that minorities are still underrepresented in all levels of the industry, prompting many organizations, including the Benton Foundation to continue public education efforts about the role of media in a democracy and the importance of a media environment that reflects the nation's diversity and provides an inclusive telecommunications environment for all.

*Andrea L. Taylor is president of the Benton Foundation. She can be reached at [www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org). The Benton Foundation received the Alliance's George Stoney Award for Humanistic Communications in 1990. The full text of the original article can be accessed at <http://www.benton.org/publibrary/issuesinfocus/1963march.html>.*

*Adapted from an article originally published at [www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org) on August 28, 2003*



# Convergence: The Tie That Binds PEG access to Its Allies

BY CHUCK SHERWOOD

Sitting here on Cape Cod at the leading edge of the North American continent, my quest for the past couple of months has been to reflect on the past, present and future of the PEG access/community media movement and the relationship with our allies.

Community access has allies in the media reform, online activists, media arts center and the community technology and networking movements, as well as consumer and public interest advocacy organizations and foundations that support media and digital divide issues. We also have allies in local franchising authorities, who manage the local right-of-way and siting permits utilized by the cable and telecommunication providers for the delivery of wireline and wireless services. And there are the state and federal regulatory agencies and the state and federal legislative bodies. They may or may not be our allies but they are the institutional arenas that our allies and we have to focus on in our struggle to represent our organizational and our communities' interests.

With each passing day, we read, hear about and deal with the consolidation of print, broadcast and electronic media, telecommunications infrastructure, and content providers and the continuing deregulation of the regulatory structure, as we have known it. The transformations of the past 20 years and the access movement's relationship with other media reform groups are better understood through a historical perspective on the development of various communications distribution infrastructure and related regulatory structures.

In order to understand these transformations, let's look back to the middle of the nineteenth century when the United States began creating continental connectivity with railroads and their telegraph networks. Those networks not only ran the railroads but also provided the distribution means for news and information as well as personal communications. The telegraph began to eliminate the delay,

due to distance, in the delivery of not only goods, but also information and communication and resulted in the beginning development of the mass print media as newspapers had access to national information.

After the Civil War, the North American continent was connected with England and then Europe by transatlantic cables. The text-based, wireline Victorian Internet emerged as an early form of email service. By the early twentieth century, this wireline infrastructure also delivered telephone services. Wireless telecommunications infrastructure developed through the creation of the wireless telegraph system that Marconi developed on Cape Cod in 1903. At first, the wireless telegraph was a text-based service. It soon became an audio-based service—radio and then cell phones—and eventually audio and visual—television. This communications infrastructure has evolved into today's wireline and wireless services delivered by terrestrial and satellite-based providers that carry voice, video and data services.

The implementation of these infrastructures and services did not occur in a regulatory vacuum. Since the building of the infrastructure necessitated granting rights for the use of public acreage, both physical and electronic, government had a critical role. Both granting processes and regulation came under the jurisdiction of various local, state and federal entities generally without much public participation. For example, the federal government played a pivotal role with land grants and subsidies to the railroad corporations and telegraph companies. Also without electricity, there would be no telecommunications. The development of the local, regional and national electric grids occurred parallel to telecommunications infrastructure and have the same granting process for the use of the public rights-of-way. You only need to view historical photographs of the forests of utility poles and wires that filled the streets of early twentieth century cities to understand some of the rea-

sons regulation was necessary.

Regulation was also necessary to insure that all communities were served. *Communities not connected to transportation lines, electric grids or telecommunications networks did not have the same potential for development as those that were connected.* The electromagnetic spectrum was also regulated so that one provider did not interfere with the transmission of the others in their local service area. The high capital costs of constructing networks, and interconnection, developed natural monopolies that needed regulation, in areas such as universal service and price control, in order to protect consumers, whether they were individuals, government entities, nonprofit institutions or businesses. The support by government for monopoly providers began to unravel in the late 1970s with trucking and airline deregulation and moved quickly to media and telecommunications throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

So, how does this historical development of these infrastructure and regulatory models connect the PEG Access/community media movement to our various allies? The answer is the impact of convergence on several levels.

First, there is technological convergence. With the migration from analog to digital content services, we are moving from three different delivery infrastructures that have been owned by different types of corporations to the delivery of voice, video and data services by wireline or wireless broadband infrastructure providers. The convergence of delivery technology has aligned the community access movement with the community computing and networking movements, low power radio advocates and other public interest organizations working on digital divide issues.

The second convergence issue is better known as consolidation, or some would call it the remonopolization of the ownership structure of these providers. During the 1990s the buzzword was synergy, but the reality was that multimedia conglomerates were not only vertically



# For the Record

## Organizations Opposed To Media Concentration

### Media-Related Organizations

- ▲ Action Coalition for Media Education [www.acmecoalition.org](http://www.acmecoalition.org)
- ▲ American Federation of Television & Radio Artists, [www.aftra.org](http://www.aftra.org)
- ▲ Benton Foundation, [www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org)
- ▲ Black Citizens for a Fair Media, [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org)
- ▲ Caucus for Producers, Writers and Directors, [www.caucus.org](http://www.caucus.org) [index.html](http://index.html)
- ▲ Center for Creative Voices in Media [www.creativevoices.us](http://www.creativevoices.us)
- ▲ Coalition for Program Diversity (includes: American Federation of TV & Radio Artists (NY, NY); Carsey-Werner-Mandabach, L.L.C. (LA, CA); Directors Guild of America (LA, CA); Marian Rees Association, Inc. (Studio City, CA); Media-Com (NY, NY); Screen Artists Guild of America (LA, CA); Sony Pictures Television (Culver City, CA); Stephen J. Cannell Productions (LA, CA) [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org) [pr/0203/fccpdfs/DiversityCoalREPLY.pdf](http://pr/0203/fccpdfs/DiversityCoalREPLY.pdf)
- ▲ Future of Music Coalition [www.futureofmusic.org](http://www.futureofmusic.org)
- ▲ Mediascope, [www.mediascope.org](http://www.mediascope.org)
- ▲ Minority Media Telecommunications Council [www.mmtconline.org](http://www.mmtconline.org)
- ▲ Morality in the Media [www.moralityinmedia.org](http://www.moralityinmedia.org)
- ▲ National Association for Better Broadcasting [www.nab.org](http://www.nab.org) [about/](http://about/)
- ▲ National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters [www.nabob.org](http://www.nabob.org)
- ▲ National Association of Hispanic Journalists [www.nahj.org](http://www.nahj.org)
- ▲ National Institute on Media and the Family [www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org)
- ▲ National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture (NAMAC) [www.namac.org](http://www.namac.org)
- ▲ Newspaper Guild [www.newsguild.org](http://www.newsguild.org)
- ▲ Parents Television Council [www.parentstv.org](http://www.parentstv.org)
- ▲ Public Relations Society of America [www.prsa.org](http://www.prsa.org)
- ▲ Sandra M. Ortiz, Executive Director of the University of Southern California's

Center for Communication Law & Policy, [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org) [pr/0103/fccpdfs/Ortiz-Comments.pdf](http://pr/0103/fccpdfs/Ortiz-Comments.pdf)

- ▲ Telecommunications Research Action Center [www.trac.org](http://www.trac.org)
- ▲ Washington Area Citizens Coalition Interested in Viewers' Constitutional Rights [www.mediaaccess.org](http://www.mediaaccess.org) [programs/diversity/comments/rdiotvxo.htm](http://programs/diversity/comments/rdiotvxo.htm)
- ▲ Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, [www.wifp.org](http://www.wifp.org)
- ▲ Writers Guild of America (east & west) [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org)

### Media Reform and Advocacy Organizations

- ▲ Free Press, [www.mediareform.net/](http://www.mediareform.net/)
- ▲ Media Access Project [www.mediaaccess.org](http://www.mediaaccess.org)
- ▲ Center for Digital Democracy [www.democraticmedia.org](http://www.democraticmedia.org)
- ▲ Electronic Frontier Foundation [www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org)
- ▲ Reclaim the Media! [www.reclaimthemedial.org](http://www.reclaimthemedial.org)
- ▲ Center for International Media Action [www.mediaactioncenter.org](http://www.mediaactioncenter.org)
- ▲ Media Alliance [www.media-alliance.org](http://www.media-alliance.org)
- ▲ Media Democracy Legal Project [www.mediareformproject.org](http://www.mediareformproject.org)
- ▲ Our Media Voice [www.ourmediavoice.org](http://www.ourmediavoice.org)
- ▲ Public Knowledge [www.publicknowledge.org](http://www.publicknowledge.org)
- ▲ National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors [www.natoa.org](http://www.natoa.org)
- ▲ National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture [www.namac.org](http://www.namac.org)
- ▲ Alliance for Community Media [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org)
- ▲ Community Technology Centers' Network [www.ctcnet.org](http://www.ctcnet.org)

but also horizontally integrating. A recent example is the FCC's elimination of ownership barriers among cable companies, radio and TV broadcast networks and newspapers. Now we have the prospect of Comcast, the nation's second largest cable company, buying Disney/ABC, one of the largest owners of content.

Concerns over this horizontal ownership of content and distribution technology by fewer and fewer companies has spawned alliances among long-time media reform organizations and activists, professional journalist groups, media arts centers, the creative community, consumer groups and many other diverse issue-related organizations, such as NOW, the NRA, National PTA and Common Cause.

This leads to the third convergence issue, which is regulatory convergence. The multimedia conglomerates are moving quickly to utilize converged delivery technologies and yet Congress and the FCC are using old definitions for these services which, in turn, frame the regulatory issues for state and local governments. When, technically, all content is digital, then the regulatory approach of defining the services as information services, telecommunications services or cable services no longer makes sense. It is all 1s and 0s being delivered by wireline and wireless providers. What is still relevant is that the delivery technology is using the public right-of-way and public spectrum.

The technological changes are beginning to drive changes to the regulatory structure. These regulatory developments are dictating stronger coalitions among community access advocates, local franchising authorities for telecommunications and cable, national groups like NATOA, NLC and U.S. Conference of Mayors, and other organizations working on spectrum and right-of-way management in the public interest, such as the New America Foundation and the Center for Digital Democracy.

It will be through an understanding of the convergence of new technologies and infrastructure and the community access movement's reliance on strong relationships with our allies that will lead to legislation and regulatory structures that protect and preserve the interests of our local communities. This struggle will make us all locally active and globally connected.

*Chuck Sherwood is a senior partner with Community Media Visioning Partners and senior associate with TeleDimensions, Inc. He can be reached at 508.385.3808, [chuck.sherwood@verizon.net](mailto:chuck.sherwood@verizon.net).*



# Low Power Radio Takes Hold

*Radio pirates across the political spectrum decided to cast their defiant radio broadcasts as acts of civil disobedience against a wealth-based broadcasting system.*

BY PETE TRIDISH

Prometheus Radio Project has been fighting for community radio since the late 1990s. At that time, it was considered a political impossibility for low power radio stations to get a community radio license. The Federal Communications Commission had frozen noncommercial radio licensing since the early 1980s. The agency had a long-standing policy of benign indifference to the unprofitable portion of the FM band. However, push for change was brewing in local communities. Radio pirates across the political spectrum decided to cast their defiant radio broadcasts as acts of civil disobedience against a wealth-based broadcasting system.

In 1996, pro-corporate legislation lifted restrictions on ownership of broadcast outlets, making it possible for a corporation to own an unlimited number of radio stations across the country. This allowed corporations to buy local media outlets by the bucketful, while independent owners went out of business attempting to compete with the chain owners. These corporate media moguls have enormous power, frequently have other business interests and interconnected agendas, and have enormous stakes in the outcomes of public policy debates. Not only do they control the channels through which most Americans understand public debates, but they are also engaged in a cut-throat race to the bottom line to gain audience and build advertising revenue.

It is a strangely myopic view that corporations can be impartial, disinterested managers and stewards of the broadcast spectrum. And in what seems to be an obvious breach of the guardianship of the airwaves entrusted to the government by the public, the FCC has largely supported the shift toward a democratically-bankrupt, corporate hegemony.

After years of public comment and engineering studies, the combined pressure from media reformers and direct action activists prevailed to win a partial victory. On January 26, 2000, the FCC created a new low power

FM (LPFM) service. The rules allowed small nonprofit groups, libraries, churches and community organizations to apply for licenses to operate simple, inexpensive community-based radio stations. Since then, a slew of groups, including unions, civil rights groups, environmental organizations and other community organizations, received licenses. As of November 2003, about 250 of these new independent-spirited stations are on the air, and many hundreds more are on the way. LPFM stations have freedom in programming choices—and also freedom not to run the most titillating and pandering forms of programs just to increase audience numbers.

Despite the excitement generated by these new stations, those on the air today are actually the lucky exceptions. Most groups with community radio dreams have been waiting for years without any FCC action. Many other groups were not even given an opportunity to apply. The FCC's original proposal for LPFM would have opened up thousands more frequencies to commu-

nity groups.

Unfortunately, Congress (under pressure from incumbent broadcasters) snuck the "Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act" into a "must-pass" spending bill in late 2000. Under this legislation, no new stations are allowed in the top 50 urban markets.

Prometheans and media activists for democracy will focus our efforts on repealing the "Broadcast Preservation Act," allowing community radio into cities. Our other main goal is to pass legislation protecting the public from rampant consolidation of media ownership.

For more information go to:

[www.prometheusradio.org](http://www.prometheusradio.org)

*Pete Tridish founded a pirate radio station, and its legal successor RadioVolta.org, in Philadelphia. He is also a founder of the Prometheus Radio Project. He tours the country regularly to help start community LPFM radio stations and speaks at colleges, coffee shops, living rooms, garages and even the CATO Institute promoting media democratization. He holds a BA in Appropriate Technology from Antioch College.*



## Prometheus Sues FCC

In early June 2003, the FCC announced plans to ease already slack regulation on media ownership limits. Three months later, in Philadelphia, the ordinarily scruffy activists at Prometheus Radio Project put on their borrowed suits and black sneakers (that could almost pass for dress shoes) and went to court. With attorneys from Media Access Project, Prometheus sued the FCC for a stay of the implementation of these potentially devastating rules, and won. The stay allows Prometheus an opportunity to prove that the new regulations would permit corporate media moguls to increase their holdings at the expense of localism and diversity.

## Radio Consciencia Is On the Air!

The Prometheus Radio Project and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) successfully put a new community radio station on the air December 5-7, 2003, at Prometheus' Fifth Radio Barnraising.

The CIW is a community-based farm worker organization. Its members are largely Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout the state of Florida. They fight for fair wages and the right to organize. Radio Consciencia will air programs in several languages, including Spanish, Creole and English.

Radio barnraisings are conferences where volunteers are trained and then build an entire low power radio station from the microphone to the antenna. Prometheus has organized radio barnraisings in Maryland, California, Louisiana and Washington. The next planned one is in late spring 2004, at a site in New England.



Central New York has a potential Homeland Security problem, and I don't mean one related to the stressed power grid or Hancock International Airport. This one concerns the health of local radio news. During a crisis, local radio is the public's information lifeline; it instantly transforms into the public's single most important mass medium. In such circumstances, radio ceases to be just a business and becomes a part of the Homeland Security response, with clear responsibilities to the public.

The August 14, 2003 power failure gave us a chance to test the readiness of local radio news in a crisis. I had no power at my home. I tuned to WSYR-AM, which markets itself as Central New York's home for news and talk. Indeed, so branded is WSYR-AM as our local radio news station, that it never occurred to me to tune anywhere else. I am a faithful listener.

What I heard, from about 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. was not encouraging. Rather, it was deeply disturbing and deserves community discussion.

Think back to WSYR's response to the Labor Day storm of 1998. It was heroic, precisely what news radio should be in a crisis. I was glued to its coverage from 3 a.m. until well into the next day. The station provided local information, reassurance and a sense of community.

I assumed the same would be forthcoming on August 14. Radio news people live for these kinds of crises. At a station truly dedicated to news, all personnel would report to work and be assigned to beats, such as the mayor's office and the police; advertisements would be bumped from the schedule; a traffic helicopter would be dispatched; and local spokespeople would be in the studio to answer questions from callers.

If the emergency was regional or national in scope, a small portion of each

# WHEN THE POWER WENT OFF, LOCAL COMMERCIAL RADIO FAILED LISTENERS!

BY DAVID RUBIN

hour would be devoted to updating listeners on the problem's scope. But the primary focus would be local. Listeners would learn what was happening, how government was responding and how they should respond.

I heard almost none of this on August 14. News Director Bill Carey was the anchor and seemed to be all alone, without a local reporting staff to turn to. After brief local segments, he switched to a nationally focused CNN feed.

Afternoon talk-show host Jim Reith did his best to convert his show into a command post by taking calls from listeners. While interesting, callers do not substitute for a trained reporting staff and the station runs the risk of inaccuracy when relying on such "correspondents."

Once Reith finished his program, the station simulcast the audio from its sister television station Channel 9 for a short while, and then took the ABC television network feed where I learned about what was happening in New York City and around the country, but nothing about the Syracuse area. We just disappeared.

My power returned shortly after 10 p.m. Crisis over. But suppose the power

failure had lasted for days or there had been a toxic spill or a biological attack? What would WSYR have done to inform us?

The Syracuse radio market, like most markets (thanks to the FCC), is in the grip of a monopoly. Clear Channel Communications, based in San Antonio, Texas, owns WSYR, seven other radio stations and one television station in our market. We have been told that the monopoly's good side is Clear Channel's ability to pull together resources and offer a better product than an independent owner could muster.

If so, that didn't happen on August 14.

Either Clear Channel is in the news business at WSYR—as it claims to be—or it is not. Based on the August 14 crisis, it no longer employs a newsroom staffed to handle an emergency. So this now becomes OUR emergency. What is to be done?

Clear Channel has at least four options.

First, it can put the public's interest ahead of its profit margin and staff this station properly. The media have constitutional protection, and the Founding Fathers didn't confer it to protect Clear Channel's shareholders and executives.

Or, if Clear Channel doesn't want to go it alone, it can offer to join a consortium of other Central New York radio stations, commercial and noncommercial, to respond locally to emergencies.

Thirdly, Clear Channel can abandon the news-talk format and permit another station to fill that niche with a better product.

Finally, Clear Channel can sell the station to a local ownership group dedicated to operating it in the public interest.

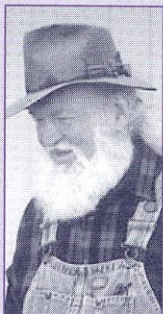
The FCC used to require all licensees to operate in the public interest before it caved in to the broadcast lobby and dropped serious oversight of the industry. The government got us into this problem. Now it must get us out to protect our security in Syracuse.

Clear Channel, what do you intend to do? Our lives may depend on your answer.

*David Rubin has been dean of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse since 1990. He teaches First Amendment law, has written extensively about the performance of journalists, and was a Pulitzer Prize Juror for two years in the late 1990s.*

## Utah Sings an Ode to Community Radio

Community media has few proponents who can sing the truth better than singer/raconteur Utah Phillips. You can hear his take on community media put to song on the October 18, 2003 *Prairie Home Companion* radio program, which also included Al Franken. Visit [www.prairiehome.org/performances/20031018/](http://www.prairiehome.org/performances/20031018/) and take a listen to segment nine for a treat. For more on Utah Phillips, a story in himself, visit [www.utahphillips.org](http://www.utahphillips.org) or check out any of the other 16,000 citations on a Google search.





# Warning: Free Trade Agreements May Be Hazardous to Your Media's Health

BY BOB RUSSELL

For Wallach, director of Global Trade Watch, laid out the hazards to democratic media reform from various "free trade" agreements and warned that any progress made by media reformers with the FCC in the United States to rein in the power of corporate media can and will be overridden by international trade agreements like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA).

Wallach spoke at the National Conference on Media Reform, November 2003, on a panel titled Global Trade Agreements and Communications Control, about how global trade agreements are threatening to stifle speech and expand corporate power over democratically created, public interest media policy in the U.S. and abroad.

She said that experts in public interest communication policy and world trade issues need to develop strategies to counteract proposed trade rules in the WTO, NAFTA and FTAA (Free Trade Areas of the Americas) that would allow transnational media conglomerates to sue governments for affecting media ownership controls or public funding of media. Expansion of rules that will affect media issues are known as the GATS (General Agreement on Trade and Services).

She made it clear that these trade agreements are not really about "free trade." They are about the corporate governance of the global economy. In a

sense, it is turning over the control and regulation of the economy for the benefit of large corporate interests that reduce culture, media and social concerns into the bottom-line of corporate earnings.

The direction of the language in these trade agreements is to commoditize media services so they are regulated as "commodities." Once media services are commodities, corporate interests are protected from many government regulations that might interfere with "free trade." For example, regulations could include rules the FCC imposes on the percentage of ownership of media properties in the same market. These rules could be considered a restraint of trade and be declared illegal under WTO and NAFTA rules.

The proposed expansion of NAFTA known as the FTAA and CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Area) would include these rules and expand the coverage to most of the western hemisphere.

Wallach appealed to organizations like the Alliance for Community Media to collaborate with Global Trade Watch and others, and to lead the charge to prevent further erosion of media control from these international trade agreements. People working in the public communications policy arena need to engage in this battle against corporate globalization.

*Bob Russell is co-director of Neahtawanta Center ([www.nrec.org](http://www.nrec.org)) and co-owner of the Neahtawanta Inn – B&B ([www.oldmission.com/inn](http://www.oldmission.com/inn)) in Traverse City, Michigan. He can be contacted at 800.220.1415 or [brus-sell@nrec.org](mailto:brus-sell@nrec.org).*

You can listen to the mp3 audio of Wallach's presentation at the National Conference on Media Reform at [www.mediareform.net/conf/recordings.php](http://www.mediareform.net/conf/recordings.php).

## Resources

- ▲ Global Trade Watch [www.citizen.org/trade](http://www.citizen.org/trade)
- ▲ Free Press [www.mediareform.net](http://www.mediareform.net)
- ▲ American Friends Service Committee [www.afsc.org/trade/learn](http://www.afsc.org/trade/learn)
- ▲ Communication Rights in the Information Society [www.crisinfo.org](http://www.crisinfo.org)
- Global Exchange [www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ftaa](http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/ftaa)
- ▲ Independent Media Center [www.ftaaimc.org](http://www.ftaaimc.org)
- ▲ WTO site link [www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/serv\\_e/serv\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_e.htm)
- ▲ Hemispheric Social Alliance [www.asc-hsa.org](http://www.asc-hsa.org)
- ▲ International Gender and Trade Network [www.genderandtrade.net](http://www.genderandtrade.net)
- ▲ International Network for Cultural Diversity [www.incd.net](http://www.incd.net)
- ▲ IP Justice [www.ipjustice.org](http://www.ipjustice.org) FTAA
- ▲ Jobs with Justice [www.jwj.org/global/FTAA/stopFTAA.htm](http://www.jwj.org/global/FTAA/stopFTAA.htm)
- ▲ Public Citizen [www.citizen.org/trade/ftaa](http://www.citizen.org/trade/ftaa)
- ▲ Union Network International, Media Sector [www.union-network.org/UNIsite/Sectors/MEI/MEI.html](http://www.union-network.org/UNIsite/Sectors/MEI/MEI.html)
- ▲ World Forum on Communications Rights [www.communicationrights.org](http://www.communicationrights.org)

## On the Record: Senate comments from Congressional Testimony on SJ Resolution 17

*"In my time as chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, no issue has erupted so rapidly and evoked such passion from the public as media consolidation. These are critically important decisions." – Senator John McCain (R-AZ)*

*"The rule changes undermine the public interest and do nothing to ensure diversity of viewpoints, "localism," coverage of events in local communities by people who are a part of that community, or to ensure that healthy competition exists amongst media outlets." – Maria Cantwell (D-WA)*

*"The Commission's first responsibility is to ensure diversity, competition and localism. The Commission has no responsibility to facilitate the business plans of the major networks or any other narrow economic interest." – John Kerry (D-MA)*

*"If allowed to stand, the FCC rules will ravage the independence and character of other forms of media, from television to newspapers, the way radio has already been ravaged."*

*– Russ Feingold (D-WI)*



# Universal Community Access from Thin Air?

BY MICHAEL CALABRESE AND MATT BARRANCA

More than ever, community leaders are looking to the heavens in their attempts to bring affordable broadband Internet access to their communities. This sky gazing is not a faith-based initiative, but rather a growing trend to tap the power of the public airwaves to provide inexpensive high-speed wireless Internet access.

The trend, of course, started with the rise of Wi-Fi technology, which allows users to send data wirelessly at short distances at connection speeds as high as 54 Mbps. Inexpensive wireless routers, available at any Wal-Mart, allow users to share bandwidth by accessing the unlicensed frequency bands—the small portion of the electromagnetic spectrum that is free and open to citizen access. With amazing success, more than 2,500 Wireless ISPs (WISPs) and nonprofit Community Access Networks (CANs) are using modified Wi-Fi equipment and the unlicensed bands to provide broadband access to entire communities.

The success of these efforts relies on free access to the small portion of the public airwaves that does not require an FCC license—the unlicensed bands at 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz, and at 5.7 and 5.8 GHz. Within this small sliver of the spectrum—once considered “junk bands” because they are shared with garage door openers, cordless phones, microwave ovens, and thousands of other such devices—countless community networks are reaching underserved populations and thousands of U.S. schools are using wireless local area networks to connect classrooms.

This activity is great news for communities, but the success of unlicensed spectrum to provide last-mile connectivity reinforces the reality that the vast majority of the spectrum is off-limits to citizens for direct access. The truth is that much of the spectrum represents an enormous untapped public resource that could be used by communities to solve broadband Internet access problems quickly, efficiently and for themselves. The New America Foundation recently published the *Citizen's Guide to the Airwaves* (see images) to illustrate how the

*The truth is that much of the spectrum represents an enormous untapped public resource that could be used by communities to solve broadband Internet access problems quickly, efficiently and for themselves.*

spectrum is allocated, and to demonstrate the untapped potential of the public airwaves.

Just as the Federal Communications Commission sets rules for media ownership, it also decides which frequencies can be used by whom and for what purpose. Currently, the most useful block of spectrum is allocated, free of charge, to the exclusive use of television broadcasters. The low-frequency, broadcast spectrum is supremely valuable because at low frequencies, signals are able to cut through trees, walls and other obstacles than the higher frequency bands used by cell phones, satellite TV and most other of wireless devices. The New America Foundation estimates that the 67 channels of spectrum allocated to local and

network TV broadcasters in each market are worth more than \$200 billion. In a confidential memo, media analyst Tom Wolzien told the National Association of Broadcasters that its spectrum was worth \$367 billion. Yet, for over 50 years, the FCC has granted TV broadcasters exclusive access to these bands free of charge, requiring only minimal public interest obligations taking the form of heavily marketed children's programming, 10 and 15-second public service announcements, and many news shows of questionable “educational” content.

To measure how these valuable bands are being used, the New America Foundation surveyed the spectrum above our offices in population-dense Washington, DC to find that at any given time, no more than 62 percent of the spectrum is in use. Meanwhile, far removed from this vast wasteland of beachfront spectrum, in the congested unlicensed bands, WISPs and CANs are providing high speed Internet access to communities long ignored by cable and DSL providers. In just one example, the Rockwood Area School District in rural Pennsylvania has built an expansive, wireless wide area network that connects two area schools and provides affordable high speed access to as many as 100 area house-

## The spectrum's worth compared to other things

each ■ = \$1 billion

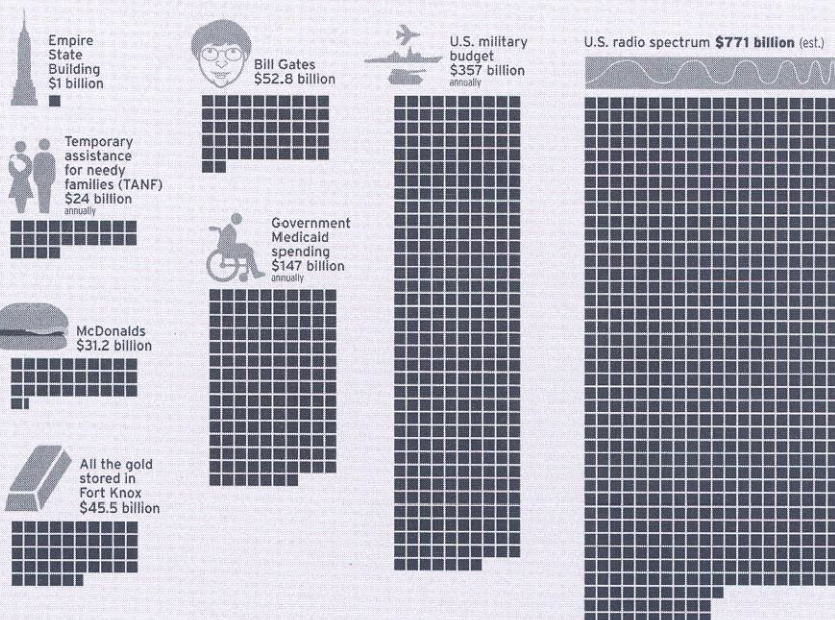


CHART BY NIGEL HOLMES



holds.

One hope of community groups, such as the popular, nonprofit networks built by NYCwireless.net and the Bay Area Research Wireless Network ([www.barwn.org](http://www.barwn.org)), is to share access to unused, low-frequency TV bands (and perhaps even with the military, which holds the largest share of prime frequencies, which it uses only in certain places at certain times). These CANs use low-power, smart radios, which have the ability to change their frequencies to avoid interference with the high-powered broadcasters. New "cognitive radio" devices employ a listen-before-talk technology that allows the efficient sharing of underutilized airwaves. But FCC licensees, in any of the bands, are opposed to sharing frequencies with community networks because it could devalue the supposedly temporary spectrum licenses given to them by the FCC, which they aspire to own outright. This is especially true now that the FCC is moving to allow licensees to lease their spectrum allocations.

Unlike any previous technology, unlicensed wireless broadband has allowed communities to address access issues for themselves. But the ability of this technology to make a real impact on rural and urban community access is far from certain. Numerous battles are being waged in the FCC by broadcast, cellular and even educational lobbyists to claim a portion of the spectrum for themselves—discreetly re-appropriating the public airwaves into private property.

Currently, the best bet for universal broadband access is through wireless sharing of the untapped spectrum resource. But without citizen interest in this open access issue, community leaders looking to the sky may one day only find more thin air.

Michael Calabrese is director of the New America Foundation's Spectrum Policy Program, where Matt Barranca is a program associate. The CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE AIRWAVES can be downloaded at [www.spectrumpolicy.org](http://www.spectrumpolicy.org).

## For Further Reading on the Airwaves

THE FOLLOWING TITLES ARE AVAILABLE AT  
[www.spectrumpolicy.org](http://www.spectrumpolicy.org)

▲ *The Citizen's Guide to the Airwaves*, New America Foundation

▲ *Radio Revolution: The Coming Age of Unlicensed Wireless*, by Kevin Werbach

"Reclaiming the 'Vast Wasteland': Unlicensed Sharing of Broadcast Spectrum," by J.H. Snider and Max Vilimpoc

▲ "Breaking the Chains: Unlicensed Spectrum as a Last-Mile Broadband Solution," by James H. Johnston and J.H. Snider

ALSO SEE:

▲ *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*, by Lawrence Lessig, (New York: Random House, 2001).

▲ *The FCC's Spectrum Policy Task Force Report*, available at <http://www.fcc.gov/sptf/reports.html>

COMMUNITY ACCESS NETWORKS:

▲ NYCwireless: [www.nycwireless.net](http://www.nycwireless.net)

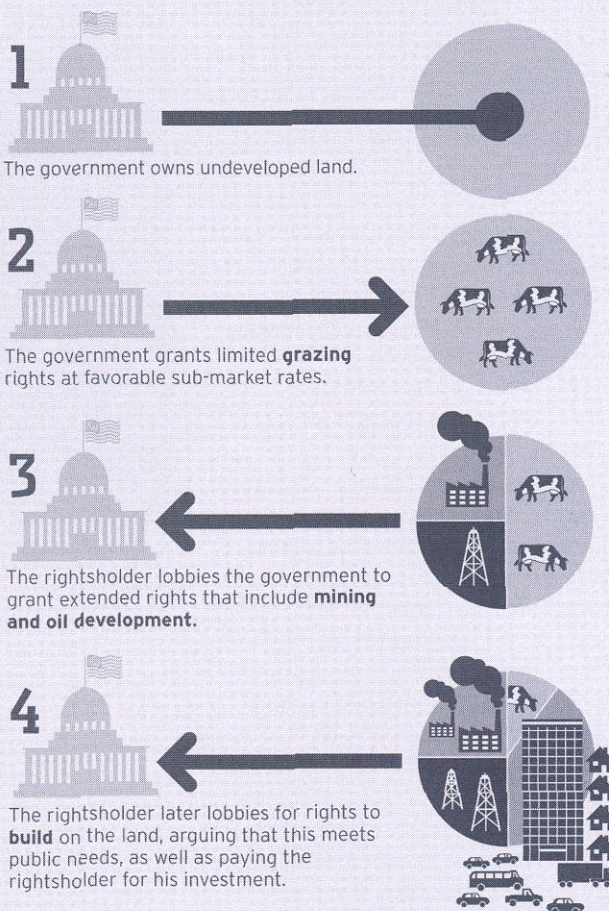
▲ Bay Area Research Wireless Network: [www.barwn.org](http://www.barwn.org)

▲ Seattle Wireless: [www.seattlewireless.net](http://www.seattlewireless.net)

▲ Austin Wireless: [www.austinwireless.net](http://www.austinwireless.net)

## The politics of spectrum

To help understand **how spectrum lobbying works**, here's an analogy with federal land grants:



Similarly, lobbying by incumbent licensees for spectrum 'flexibility' can turn a limited-term, low-value TV license into a permanent and far more valuable mobile Internet service.

## Actual vs. potential market values

Under the FCC's 75-year-old zoning—and giveaway—allocation process, most licenses specify the service that must be operated at that frequency. Most licensees do not have the flexibility to change the service provided, or to sell or sublease the license, without permission. This is analogous to a vendor who obtains a license to operate a hot dog stand in New York's Central Park. The right to sell hot dogs is a lot less valuable than the right to operate a retail store in the same area.

Similarly, a license to operate a TV station is much less valuable than a license to provide cell phone or wireless Internet services on the same spectrum—licenses that have sold at auction for billions of dollars. As a result, broadcasters and some other incumbent licensees are lobbying for spectrum "flexibility"—new, more valuable license rights that they could even sell or sublease to other companies. Cell phone companies that paid billions at auction for spectrum licenses are among those arguing that such enhanced license rights should be auctioned, not given away.

CHART BY NIGEL HOLMES





# An Old Story with a New Twist

COMMENTARY BY **GEORGE C. STONEY**

*I*t seems I have lived with the threat—and reality—of “media concentration” all my life.

First it was the way Hearst and other press lords were buying up our hometown newspapers. (It’s hard to believe that at one time almost every middle-size city in the U.S. had at least a couple of truly independent daily newspapers.) Then it was the newspaper chains buying up our country’s weeklies, most of them owned and edited by local journalists with a printing business on the side to support the paper.

By the 1970s, when the possibilities of cable and satellite communication were being discovered, we had another fight on our hands. This time we came up with some part of an answer: the concept of public access as a mechanism for making local media real. Defying every president of media domination, we have survived. But for how much longer?

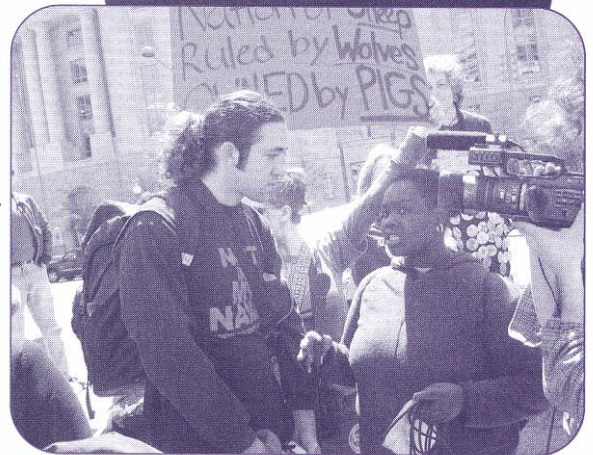
The answer to that question depends in good part on our willingness to devote energy, time and will to winning public support. No laws, no government bureau or legal president can guarantee public access unless we have a general understanding of what we are about and a greater measure of participation by a wider segment of potential viewers. This is not to say that we should be governed by how many viewers and users we have. It does mean we have to pay more attention to the interests and concerns of the many potential viewers who now do not find themselves or their vital interests



represented on our channels.

This is a continuing challenge, and one that may necessitate making some modifications in the governance of some of our channels’ “first come, first served” rules that was such an important part of our founding principles. It may require access center staff people to be more pro-active in seeking the unheard-from and helping them get involved. If “constant vigil is the only safeguard of liberty” is the rule for the survival of our governing democracy, it is equally so for the survival of public access.

*George C. Stoney is a board member for Manhattan Neighborhood Network Public Access in New York City.*



MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE OFFICES OF “THE MIDDLETOWN CRIER,” RECENTLY PURCHASED BY **MEDIAGLOM, INC.**...

GOOD NEWS, J.T. ... A THIRD OF THE STAFF HAS BEEN “TRIMMED” JUST LIKE YOU WANTED...

THAT’S JUST THE BEGINNING, CHIP...



...I’VE GOT A PLAN FOR THAT SMALL TOWN RAG TO PRODUCE SOME CASH...AND IT STARTS IMMEDIATELY!



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# Access Channels and the California Recall of 2003

BY RON COOPER

PEG access played a unique role in the historic 2003 gubernatorial recall election in California. Public access Channel 17, managed by Access Sacramento, invited all 135 gubernatorial candidates to submit a two-minute video of their positions...why they chose to run for governor of California.

In mid-August, a letter was mailed to each candidate's campaign address listed by the California Secretary of State's office. The resulting 53-minute program was a compilation of tapes from 23 candidates, gradually built over the weeks leading up to the October 7 election day.

A non-scientific, subjective analysis of the 23 statements pointed out that the candidates were sincere in their reasons for running for governor. Some were extremely self-serving while others very idealistic. The overall impression was, however, not wacky or gratuitous. Most were interested citizens, tired of business as usual and motivated by the best intentions to join in the process of change rather than sitting on the sidelines as a spectator.

Here's how Access Sacramento and the Alliance-West organized the effort.

Many of the Alliance Western Region members are located in California and we were keenly aware of the need for more information about each candidate. An informed electorate is in the best interest of all California residents. In Sacramento County alone, Access Sacramento Channel 17 serves more than 250,000 households.

We invited each candidate to create a videotape lasting no more than two minutes. The video ran in its entirety up to the two-minute mark. The videotape for-

mat was limited to VHS, S-VHS or Mini-DV. The tape's content had to be acceptable to a general audience including young children. Each candidate accepted responsibility for the content by signing and submitting a "Statement of Compliance" form with each videotape.

Access Sacramento received the video statements, assembled them in the order they were received, and cablecast them weekly, free of charge, throughout Sacramento County.

We created an incentive to submit early because the quicker the tape was submitted, the greater the playback opportunity. The program for each Saturday playback was compiled from those candidate videotapes received by the Wednesday prior to that Saturday. Tapes received after Wednesday were added to the following Saturday playback. The last playback date was October 4, 2003.

Access Sacramento made the tape available to other community access centers throughout California. Notice was sent via email to the Alliance-West member organizations. The communities of Santa Cruz, Davis and Mendocino County ran the tapes. In addition, candidates were invited to submit their video statement to any public access organization in the State and were provided the Alliance-West website as a resource.

The entire process went smoothly and offered another example of how PEG access provides a unique opportunity for information sharing not found in commercial television.

*Ron Cooper is executive director of Access Sacramento. Contact him at 916.456.8600, ext. 112, or, rcooper444@aol.com.*

## Davis Community Television Steps Up When the Major Media Won't

BY AUTUMN LABBÉ-RENAULT

Things heated up in Davis, California during spring 2003 when allegations of racism, bigotry and bullying in our local schools fueled widespread outrage and a series of community meetings.

Davis is situated 12 miles west of the state capitol of Sacramento which is also the nearest major media market. What makes headlines in our city of 64,000 typically doesn't make the five o'clock news. The network stations in Sacramento largely ignored the Davis school news and sensationalized what they did mention. Meanwhile, parents, students and school administrators in Davis rolled up their sleeves and jumped into the fray.

Davis Community Television (DCTV), the local public access channel, stepped up to the plate in two ways. First, we provided gavel-to-gavel coverage of a series of public hearings, during which students testified about their experiences. The tapes aired on our channel and were made available for checkout at our local public library.

Second, our staff launched a new series called *Davis Matters: Issues in Perspective*. Each quarter, we choose two important community topics and devote three half-hour studio shows to each topic.

The most compelling segment (and the one we received much feedback on) featured student leaders from the middle and high schools speaking out about the problems at their schools as they viewed them.

It's worth noting that in addition to facilitating volunteer programming, our organization leans heavily in the direction of choosing topics and producing content, because that's what our community demands from us.

To be able to offer the youths' perspective, free from filtering or gatekeepers, is something access offers that the networks don't—or won't.

*Autumn Labbé-Renault is director of operations at DCTV in Davis, CA. She can be contacted at autumn@dctv.davis.ca.us*

*"Congress must send the agency a clear bipartisan message—the airwaves belong to the American people, not to you and not to a small group of media elites. The FCC must be forced to address the concerns of the American people."*

*— Barbara Boxer (D-CA), from Congressional Testimony during consideration of SJ Resolution 17*



# Worcester Station Offers Voice to Community

BY MAURO DePASQUALE

In the community of Worcester, Massachusetts, WCCA TV provides the community with a local voice not found in the commercial media. The ability of community members to communicate with each other has had a profound impact on many occasions.

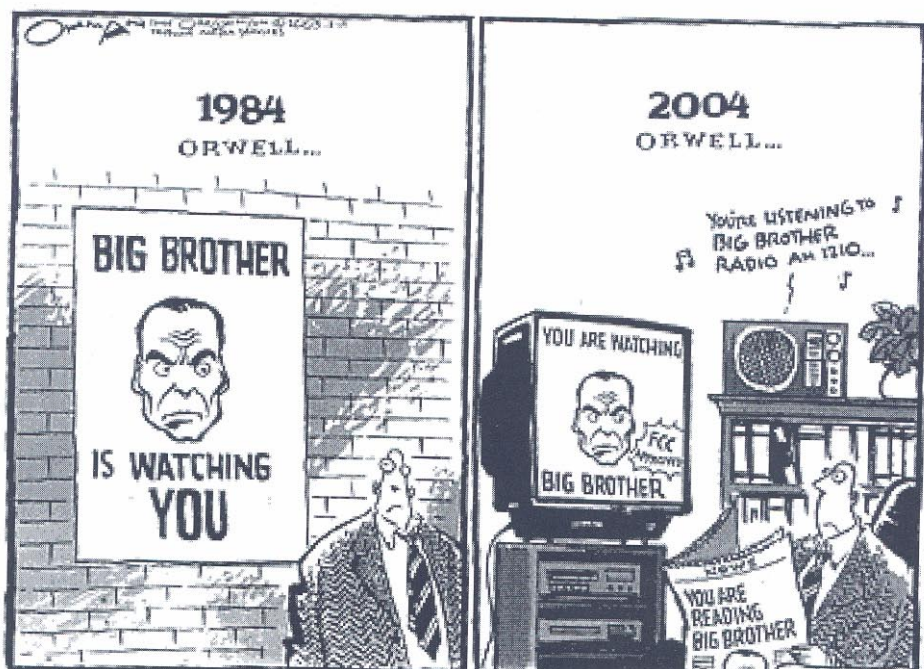
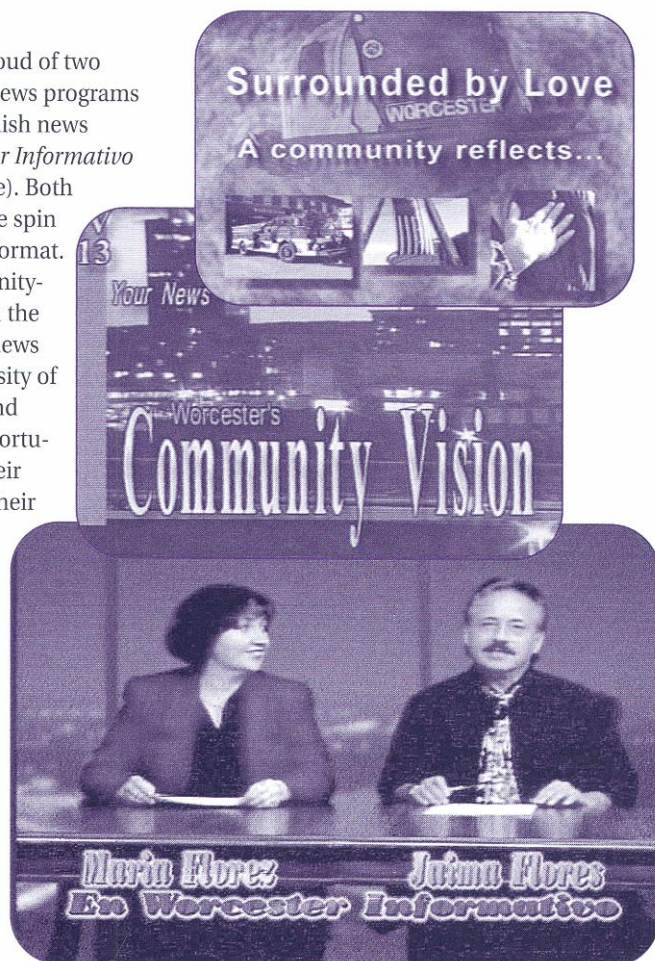
Two years ago, an issue was on the ballot about whether or not to add fluoride to the city's drinking water. Proponents, mostly backed by the local medical industry, invested thousands of dollars to persuade voters to support the addition of fluoride into local water reservoirs. Proponents ran an extensive print media and commercial television campaign. Opponents ran a grassroots campaign, with no industry funding, to oppose the ballot measure. With little money to mount a media campaign, opponents utilized Worcester's public access television station, WCCA TV 13 by organizing and producing a number of talk programs and lectures. Today, Worcester's water does not have fluoride added to it.

When Worcester tragically lost six firefighters on December 3, 1999, in a warehouse fire, the entire community, along with over 35,000 firefighters worldwide and the President of the United States, came together to pay tribute to the six heroes. WCCA TV 13 volunteers, in a collaborative partnership with scores of individuals and groups, produced the documentary *Surrounded by Love-A Community Reflects*. This documentary did not focus on the tragic imagery of that disastrous event portrayed by most of the mainstream media. Rather, it focused on the voices and feelings of those impacted by that monumental loss. The documentary played a humble role in beginning a healing process for the entire city. Former Mayor Mariano said of the work, "This video... helped capture the depth of our respect and admiration for our fallen heroes and their families." Congressman Jim McGovern announced that the video was "a powerful and heartfelt tribute...it captures the spirit of love and support." Today the program is used to help raise funds for our local firefighters' equip-

ment fund.

We are especially proud of two community-produced news programs *Community Vision* (English news magazine) and *Worcester Informativo* (Spanish news magazine). Both programs bring a unique spin to the traditional news format. They utilize the community-at-large to participate in the news gathering and as news correspondents. A diversity of various organizations and individuals have an opportunity to communicate their news, their events and their stories each week, and we get many appreciative calls from viewers. This process encourages broad based participation in the production of local news and information.

Mauro DePasquale is executive director of WCCA TV 13 in Worcester, MA. He can be contacted at 508.755.1880 or [mauro@wccatv.org](mailto:mauro@wccatv.org).





# Technology Centers: Catalysts for Community Change

BY **STEPHEN DAVIES** AND **ANDREW WILEY-SCHWARTZ**, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES, **DR. RANDAL D. PINKETT**, BCT PARTNERS, **PROFESSOR LISA SERVON**, NEW SCHOOL UNIVERSITY

This article summarizes the findings from our exploratory research into how community technology centers (CTCs) could function more effectively as public spaces and as forces for positive social change at the community level. In understanding the dynamics of their work at present, we hope to inform community technology researchers, practitioners, and funders as to the ways in which the movement can leverage its accomplishments of the past in order to serve communities more broadly as it looks toward the future.

We initiated this research, with funding and direction from the Ford Foundation, in order to assess the situation in which CTCs currently find themselves and make recommendations regarding whether and how CTCs could be supported to take on broader community agendas. The primary assumption driving this work was that CTCs—most of which are located in disadvantaged neighborhoods with rapidly changing demographics—are important not only because of their specific digital divide work, but also because they act as key public spaces in areas where there is a dearth of such community places. We also hypothesized that there was a gap between the community development and community technology fields, and that this new perspective would help to bridge this gap, enabling greater efficiency and effectiveness on both the community technology and community development fields. Through this research, our goals were to:

- ▲ Understand the extent to which CTCs already think of themselves and act as public spaces in the communities they serve;

- ▲ Investigate perceptions of a gap between community development and community technology work;

- ▲ Explore the ways in which CTCs, as public spaces, can catalyze broader positive community change and the strategies they are employing to do so;

- ▲ Identify the characteristics of CTCs that are most amenable to carrying out this kind of work;

- ▲ Discern what specific kinds of support CTCs require in order to do this kind of work; and

- ▲ Make recommendations regarding actions CTCs can take, and that funders can use to establish priorities for CTCs.

In order to carry out this agenda, we conducted several research tasks, including literature review, stakeholder focus groups, site visits, surveys and interviews.

As a result of this research, we believe that funders can play a key role by seeding efforts to create important synergies between public space, community development and community technology as illustrated in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3. Figure 1 shows some of the elements of great public spaces.

Figure 2 shows the mutual learning that can come from examining and building upon the target areas currently shared by both the community technology and community development movements. Given that these two movements are

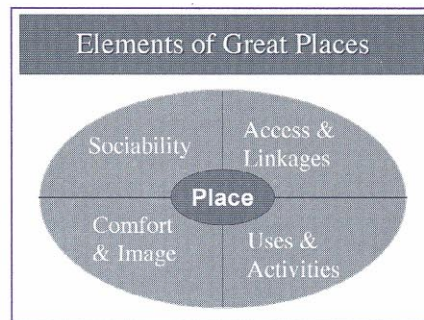


Figure 1: Elements of Great Places

somewhat entrenched in their own spheres, funders can create these spaces and help to implement the learning that results.

Figure 3 [on following page] illustrates some of the issues that CTCs can work to impact, both

by creating positive opportunities and helping to rid neighborhoods of problems, by relying on the contributions of other community partners and clients, as well as staff.

Based on these recommendations, we propose a joint process involving two primary activities:

- ▲ Planning and implementation grant process that would allow leading-edge CTCs to build a strategic plan, identify partnerships, and begin to build capacity in order to implement change at this level.

- ▲ Convening Community Technology and Community Development leaders on an ongoing basis to discuss and evaluate the efficacy of further research and funding into the community technology/com-

See **Technology**, page 34

## Developing a New Field of Inquiry

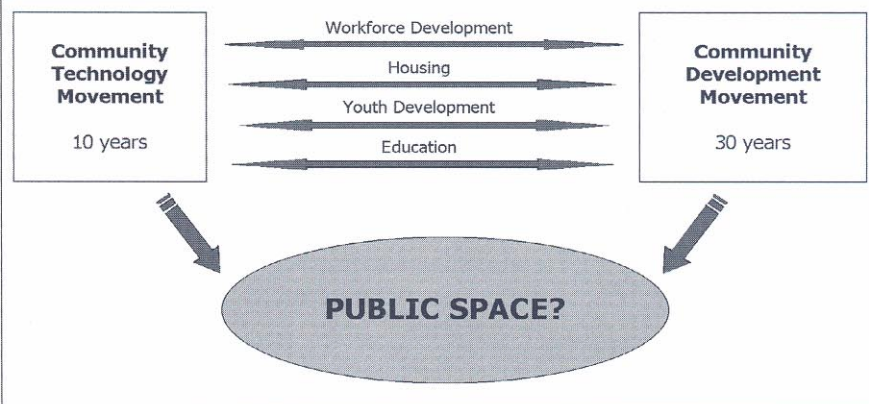


Figure 2: Synergies Between Community Development and Community Technology



# Off the Shelf

## MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL INFORMATION AGE

The Center for Internet and Society at Stanford Law School recently released Dr. Mark Cooper's new book *Media Ownership and Democracy in the Digital Information Age: Promoting Diversity with First Amendment Principles and Market Structure Analysis*.

"The future of America's media is up for grabs. Who will control it and for what purposes? With laser-like focus, Mark Cooper analyzes the growing threat to media democracy. Anyone interested in the future of the nation's media ought to read this illuminating book," FCC Commissioner, the Honorable Michael J. Copps commented.

Dr. Cooper's comprehensive analysis of media ownership in America at the start of the twenty-first century combines a detailed review of First Amendment jurisprudence with rigorous economic analysis to demonstrate the continuing need for structural limits on media ownership to promote democratic discourse in America. Based on the analysis, it presents a thorough critique of the FCC proposals to virtually eliminate all limits on media ownership.

The book is available in paper copies or for electronic download at no charge under a Creative Commons License at <http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blogs/cooper/archives/media-booke.pdf>

Cooper's 2002 book, *Cable Mergers and Monopolies: Market Power in Digital Media and Communications Networks*, is also available under a Creative Commons license at [http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blogs/cooper/archives/Cable\\_mergers.pdf](http://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blogs/cooper/archives/Cable_mergers.pdf)

## FOUL BALL

Jim Bouton's recent, self-published book provides a real-life story about concentration of media ownership and its impact from an unlikely writer, a baseball pitcher from the 1960s. The book's intrigue is created from how Bouton's quest to save a historic baseball stadium in Pittsfield, Massachusetts—Wahconah Park for you baseball aficionados—turns out to be a startling commentary on media concentration. From the only local daily newspaper's conflict of interest to corporate control of the publishing industry (the reason the book is self published), Bouton weaves an irresistible story without losing his sense of outrage or his sense of humor.

*Foul Ball* is available from [www.jimbouton.com](http://www.jimbouton.com)

—Julie S. Omelchuck

## THE VICTORIAN INTERNET: THE REMARKABLE STORY OF THE TELEGRAPH AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY'S ON-LINE PIONEERS

This quick-read history book by Tom Standage takes us back to the future where the invention of the electronic telegraph heralds a day of global peace, commerce, education and love affairs. After thousands of years of communication never eclipsing the speed of a fast horse or nearby reflecting mirror, the ability to tap out dots and dashes that formed words a world away was truly magical. As you can imagine the promises were bold and so were the characters who made them. By 1865, wires crisscrossed the globe, made many millionaires, and left some with pony express relay stations. This book is a great snapshot of the promise and peril of technology. The lessons are more valid today than ever.

—Dirk Koning

## CTC as a Catalyst for Community Change

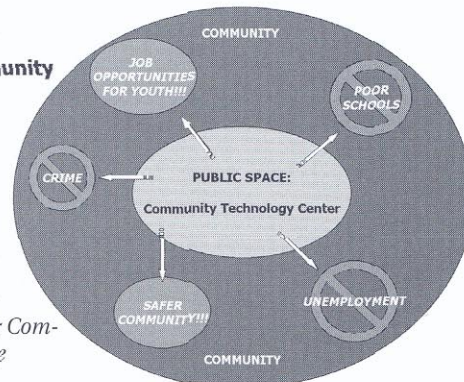


Figure 3: CTCs as Catalysts for Community Change

## Technology, from page 35

munity development/public space connection.

The planning and implementation process would enable participating CTCs to assume tasks such as the following:

- ▲ Foster an orientation that is broad enough to encompass a community development agenda, for example, via asset mapping and place analysis.
- ▲ Solicit resident involvement in identifying, understanding and addressing community issues.
- ▲ Identify ways to make the center more visible, accessible and inviting and devise ways to convert participants' energy and interest into meaningful collective action.
- ▲ Enhance CTCs ability to manage supply and demand for their services.
- ▲ Partner with other community organizations or coordinate with other internal service delivery entities.
- ▲ Develop sufficient capacity to undertake a community development agenda.

The full report can be downloaded at:

[www.bctpartners.com/comm\\_tech.htm](http://www.bctpartners.com/comm_tech.htm)

*Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS), a nonprofit founded in 1975, has helped over 1,000 communities improve their public spaces. PPS's work on design and management of public space is based on community-driven processes. PPS's activities include, among others research and advocacy programs, publications, training programs, a database of success stories, and an awards program designed to highlight the most successful public places in the world. [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org) or [pps@pps.org](mailto:pps@pps.org).*

*BCT Partners is a management, technology and policy consulting firm that works with government agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions and foundations to improve organizational effectiveness and support strategies for change. An expert in the strategic use of technology, Dr. Pinkett is a graduate of the MIT Media Laboratory where his doctoral dissertation focused on the role of community technology for the purpose of community in low-income communities. Dr. Pinkett holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Rutgers University, M.S. in Computer Science from the University of Oxford, England, as a Rhodes Scholar, joint M.S. in Electrical Engineering MBA degrees from MIT, and Ph.D. in Media Arts and Sciences from the MIT Media Laboratory. [www.bctpartners.com](http://www.bctpartners.com)*

*Lisa J. Servon is associate professor of Urban Policy and acting director of the Community Development Research Center (CDRC) at the Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy at New School University. Servon is a leading community development scholar whose work has focused on microenterprise development, capacity-building strategies for community-based organizations, and the digital divide. [www.newschool.edu/milano](http://www.newschool.edu/milano)*



# Democracy At Risk

## *A Free and Independent Press Gives Voice to the People*

BY WADE HENDERSON AND FRANK A. BLETHEN

When most of us watch TV, listen to the radio, or read newspapers or magazines, we don't realize that most of what we see and hear is owned and controlled by a small handful of powerful, international media conglomerates. And, too few of us take the time to ask—Is all this power over America's journalism and communications good for a free, democratic society?

The founders of our country clearly recognized the dangers to democracy of concentrating economic or political power in too few hands. From Adam Smith to Thomas Jefferson, from Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis to Senator Estes Kefauver—all have warned us of what Jefferson called “the battle between rapacious capitalism and democracy.”

In the last two decades, we have seen a massive disinvestment in news and journalism by the corporate owners of our newspapers and media. And the loss of the independent journalistic voices that used to connect our nation, serve our local communities and provide the foundation for our democracy.

Our media have been transformed from independent journalism organizations to financial cogs in the immense portfolios of monopolistic public companies and mega-chains—NewsCorp, AOL Time Warner, Liberty Media, to name a few.

There are only about 280 independent newspapers left in the United States and most of them are in small communities. A small handful of corporations now control most of our newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, cable outlets and satellite outlets.

The current battleground in the fight for democracy is the Federal Communications Commission.

Behind closed doors and without press examination or scrutiny, the major media company CEOs and their lobbyists have turned the FCC into their handmaiden for extending their control in pursuit of greater stock prices and short-term profit.

We have seen the disaster in radio

that followed the 1996 Telecommunications Act. If the FCC is allowed to relax the rest of its media concentration rules, Clear Channel Communications and its 1,200 radio stations give us a peak at our bleak future.

When it comes to FCC rules and concentration of media ownership, we are indeed in a battle for democracy's survival versus rapacious capitalism.

The two of us became acquainted a decade ago through our shared passion for an inclusive, just and open America.

As watchdogs for social justice and democracy, each in our own way, it has become clear to us that it is not in the self-interest of the large media companies to tell this story and, consequently, few citizens are aware of the threat to our free press. Yet, in spite of suppression by big media, the story is beginning to be told by a grassroots movement sweeping the country. More and more citizens are starting to understand the grave situation we are in.

And we are seeing Congress respond. Several members are beginning to understand the unique threat posed by giant media companies when government fails to protect independence of media and vigorous competition.

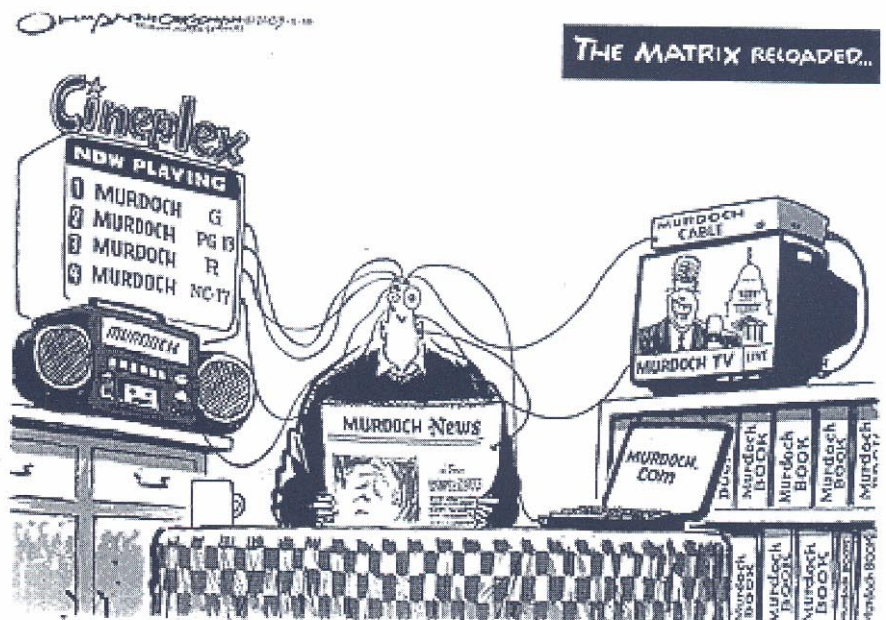
A bipartisan majority of the Senate Commerce Committee, led by Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Byron Dorgan (D-ND), sent a strong letter to the FCC calling for public hearings.

Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Herb Kohl (D-WI) and Mike DeWine (R-OH), through their committee and sub-committee leadership roles, continue to explore, challenge and raise critical issues.

Every American needs to be a warrior for democracy. Every American needs to speak up loud and often on this issue. In the finest of American traditions, we urge all citizens to call upon Congress to tell the FCC to cease and desist—to stand up to corporate power, to stand up for democracy by preventing further media concentration.

America has survived many crises in its young history. We believe we will survive this crisis too, but only if we wake up and step up quickly to defend the underpinning of our democracy: a free and independent press that gives voice to the people of this country.

*Wade Henderson is executive director of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and Frank Blethen is publisher and chief executive officer of THE SEATTLE TIMES.*



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# Facíl

For more information or questions about Facility Access, call Access Tucson at 520.624.9833.

After more than twelve years of development and incorporating the input of PEG access centers across the country, Facil has evolved into the most comprehensive and effective solution to the exceptional data management requirements of a media access center. Facil is already serving over 130 organizations from coast to coast, recovering the staff time previously lost to paperwork and improving service levels.

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and take the Facíl on-line tour. 



# National Spotlight on Our Local Fight

*Note: Senator Snowe wrote this article for CMR in November 2003. Senator Snowe was unsuccessful in pushing for a rollback to the 35 percent ownership limit. In January 2004, the Senate passed legislation to increase the broadcast media ownership cap to 39 percent. For more information on this activity, please visit the Alliance's monthly publication PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE at [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org).*

BY SENATOR OLYMPIA J. SNOWE (R-MAINE)

Local media has garnered national attention in the recent months—though they are not in the headlines we, as advocates and beneficiaries of community outlets, would prefer. The future of local, independent media sources is the focus of extensive debate—in community centers, the boardrooms of media conglomerates, and the hearing rooms in the United States' Senate. And what is at stake is no less than the freedoms and benefits of diversity, localism and community “voices.”

In June, 2003, the Federal Communications Commission issued new media ownership rules relaxing the requirements governing national television ownership, local television ownership and cross-media limits. Ignoring the urging of Congressional leaders—with Senators Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Fritz Hollings (D-SC) and myself taking the lead—and the 500,000 emails and postcards the FCC received, Chairman Michael Powell and the Commission voted 3-2 in favor of rules that would allow media conglomerates to own local affiliates that broadcast to 45 percent of the national audience. And unfortunately, the changes do not end there.

The proposed new media ownership rules would permit a corporation to own two television stations within a market of five or more stations, or three television stations in a market of more than 18 stations. The FCC would also consider, on a case-by-case basis, a corporation's request to own two of the top-four rated stations within a market of 11 television stations of fewer. That would include dozens of markets, including the Portland, Maine market, the largest in my home state. But, the changes did not end there.



With that June vote, the FCC erased decades-old bans that prevented cross-media ownership of newspaper/broadcast entities and radio/television entities. The FCC replaced those bans with a fluid formula based on the number of outlets in the market. While the FCC sought to “revise media regulations so that media ownership rules promote competition” as stated within the Commission's strategic plan, lawmakers and concerned communities recognized the significance of the June vote for what it truly does—it deprives the public access to a diversity of choices, limits our freedom of expression and curtails the public discourse. At its core, the 3-2 vote took decisive aim at the very tenets of freedom and democracy our nation is built on.

I, with the overwhelming support of my colleagues in the Senate, have been unwavering in conveying our disapproval of the new media ownership rules to Chairman Powell and the FCC members. We rightly argue that the level of media concentration proposed by the FCC—allowing media mergers in over 150 markets representing 98 percent of the American population, and according to some reports, creating a scenario where five companies or fewer could control about 60 percent of television households in just the next few years—is disastrous for the survival of diversity, localism and competition.

As part of the Senate Commerce

Committee, we have held eight hearings since June to comprehensively scrutinize the adopted rules and reinforce the far-reaching implications of these drastic changes to our nation's and our community's media ownership regulations. In fact, the Committee has held more public hearings on the issue than the FCC held prior to accepting the new media ownership rules. One of the greatest flaws of the FCC has been its lack of initiative to engage local communities and listen to the arguments and concerns of local individuals—the same local individuals who benefit from and celebrate their opportunity to express their views and opinions through community publications and local television programming. Only now is the FCC making those efforts, and I am pleased that the Commission has scheduled six public hearings of its localism task force in communities across the country, including Portland, Maine.

But meeting is just a beginning. In the Senate, the passage of a joint resolution of which I co-sponsored demonstrates bipartisan efforts to halt the determination of the FCC to deregulate the industry. We continue to argue that diversity in the marketplace of ideas and information must not be stifled, nor should community “voices” be consolidated in the hands and voices of the powerful few media moguls. Additionally, I have offered an amendment to “The Preservation of Localism, Program Diversity, and Competition in Television Service Act,” which would effectively restore the cross-ownership ban to its pre-June 2 standards. The legislation was approved by the full Senate Commerce Committee and is awaiting debate on the Senate floor.

The issue of media ownership goes to the heart of our democracy and the crux of the way in which we form our opinions on other issues of critical importance. We must not allow the multiplicity of ideas, the diversity of our opinions, and the core of our Constitutional freedoms be diluted for the wealth of a few. With each local broadcast and each weekly publication, we celebrate the

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# The Alliance's Public Policy Committee Works to Ensure Access to Electronic Media

BY GREG EPLER WOOD

The publisher of the journal you're reading is an alliance of several thousand people attempting to support and sustain community media in the face of incredible odds. A bookmaker would shudder looking at the venues into which the Alliance often fearlessly throws its hat—the U.S. Congress, the Oval Office, the FCC, state legislatures, and the court system from local districts to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The venues where our battles are played out aren't the only way to measure the enormity of our mission: we also tackle some of the most complex telecommunications issues, and enter debates with some of the most powerful industries in the world.

And why do we do this? Because in order for democracy to flourish, people must be active participants in their government, educated to think critically, and be able to freely express themselves. And to advance these democratic ideals, we must work both to ensure that people have access to electronic media, as well as to promote effective communication through community uses of media.

But when there are bills in Congress that threaten these ideals or the means to reaching these ideals, or when we encounter a narrow-minded, intolerant bureaucrat that tries to quiet the words of a community media speaker, we step in to meet the challenge, often partnering with other groups that have similar values and missions.

Focusing for the moment on the national level, this is what we've done with a number of current issues: Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP), taxation of the Internet, cable modem classification and media ownership consolidation. Each issue in its own way affects the integrity of the fabric that makes up our national information infrastructure. Without someone like the Alliance to strengthen the weave with the democratic free speech rights of the individual, the fabric will fail under the weight of its own self-importance.

**VoIP.** In a letter to the FCC, we joined with the National League of Cities (NLC),

the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM), the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA), the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) to request that the Commission slow down and consider holistically how regulation and taxation of VoIP would effect local I-Nets and other wired infrastructure that may eventually carry VoIP signals. The control of the local municipality's ability to regulate its own public rights-of-way (PROW) is at issue here.

We are also fighting the possible **taxation of the Internet** (currently embodied in Senate Bill 150), and again the concern is that a local authority's ability to regulate its own PROW will be eroded by federal rules that ignore this basic principle. Local revenues derived from compensation for use of local PROW assists many local franchising authorities around the U.S. to fund PEG access activities.

**Cable modem classification** is another area where the federal government and most segments of the telecommunications industry are attempting to minimize local authority. Here, the battle is being waged in courts against the FCC's determination that cable modem is an "information service" and thus not subject to local, state or federal regulation. Although digital Internet signals are being carried side-by-side with digital television signals over the same cable television line that uses public rights-of-way, the FCC (and the cable industry) claims that fran-

chise fees don't need to be collected on cable modem revenues. We have put lots of time (some staff, some pro bono legal) and member-contributed dollars into the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case that will soon reconsider this issue (this time before 11 judges, or, in legal terms, en banc).

Whether the argument involves what's happening in the wires above and under our streets (as it is in these three instances), or in the air we breath (as it is with broadcast media ownership consolidation), the Alliance is committed to ensuring non-commercial public access to our common space is protected.

If you want to read more about these and other current issues, please go to the public affairs section of the Alliance website: [www.alliancecm.org](http://www.alliancecm.org). While there, also take some time to browse the Legislative Action Center—a powerful, highly-functional advocacy tool that the Alliance has made available to the general public, and which has been used heavily in the fight against media consolidation.

Please re-read the third paragraph of this article: it is the Alliance's mission statement. When you are asked to contribute to our public policy efforts, please keep it in mind, and give generously.

*Greg Epler Wood is an independent consultant in public interest telecommunications policy and implementation, and the chair of the Alliance's Public Policy Committee. He has been an active member of the Alliance since 1979 and may be reached at [GregEW@Sover.net](mailto:GregEW@Sover.net)*

## **Snowe**, from page 37

"local view" of our communities. We must not surrender the unique qualities and local personalities that make our communities charming and distinct. While the media ownership debate continues into the near future—on the Senate floor, in the federal judicial system, and within town meetings and individual homes—we must not lose sight that this debate is a fight for local communities—from Portland, Maine to Spokane, Washington, and the hundreds of places in between.

*Senator Olympia J Snowe (R-ME) was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1994, where she became only the second woman in history to represent the state of Maine in the Senate. For more information or to contact Senator Snowe, please visit her website at <http://snowe.senate.gov>.*



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# A Mouse Roars in Oregon

## *The Public Good vs. Corporate Interests Goes on Trial*

BY SUE DICIPLE

### Open Access—The Stage is Set

It was early summer 1998 in Portland, Oregon. Along with my fellow citizen-appointees to the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission, I greeted an announcement with enthusiasm: as a benefit of approving our cable franchise transfer from TCI to AT&T, the new operator would implement cable modem service in our area.

As dedicated, public-spirited volunteers, we were foregoing evening barbecues and bike rides to roll up our sleeves and dig into the tedium of legal and audit documents and contract language. Little did we realize that the simple announcement was actually the first volley in a battle that would pit the public good against corporate interests, fracture the communications industry into opposing camps, and cast national policies and predilections in opposition to local interests and values. Even less did we realize that we would frame the debate on an issue of such technological and policy import that it would resonate into the 21st century. That issue has come to be known as "open access." For a variety of reasons, I believe that the issue may not have been framed at all without the mix of circumstances that are unique to "who we are" in Oregon.

It was a lovely summer night when, wistfully, the Commission took public testimony on the terms of the transfer. Public meetings on cable issues generally do not excite a lot of interest, but on this evening the meeting was well attended by the CEOs and managers of local and regional Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and their customers. They challenged the Commission: What would be required of the cable operator with regard to opening its system to competing ISPs? Phone companies were required, under a different regulatory framework, to accommodate competing ISPs on their DSL systems. But the cable companies were closing their networks to all but their own proprietary ISPs. Would the Commission



use its local franchising authority to require that AT&T adopt an open access policy, as a condition of approving the transfer?

### Eight Citizens Consider the Issues

Over the course of that summer, eight citizen commissioners from diverse walks of life and political perspectives examined these questions. Our analysis took four critical principles into consideration:

**The First Amendment.** While some commissioners were more astute about technology than others, we had all used search engines, and we knew that the portal used to access the internet had an impact on content. We had also heard stories about attempts to access Powell's Books, our beloved local bookstore-wonderland, via a proprietary ISP and the search yielded the website for a national book chain that was a "corporate partner" of the ISP. We believed that a closed access environment would hamper unfettered access to information, and as such posed a profound First Amendment issue.

**The importance of competition.** While it may not be apparent to those living and working in the urban centers where telecommunications policy is

made, those of us living in states with rural populations are acutely aware that the digital divide is largely an issue of geography. Oregon is a state where the majority of the land mass is profoundly rural, and in 1998 there was local dial-up internet access in those areas only because scrappy regional ISPs

had been willing to aggregate small numbers of users and provide service in communities to which the big providers had turned their backs, alleging "no business case." Could we, with our leverage as a major market, contribute to the extinction of ISP competition? We didn't think so.

**Local control.** Cable was "sold" to communities as a technology that would provide local benefits and be regulated locally. We asked our attorney, "Is it within our regulatory authority to require open access?" Our attorney said, "Yes." Since then, various courts have debated whether cable modem service is a "telecommunications service," an "information service," or a "cable service." In 1998, however, all parties, including the cable companies, accepted the definition of cable modem as a "cable service," and there had been no legal finding that, under the cable service definition, we would have been outside our purview in requiring open access as a condition of transfer.

**A community tradition of public involvement.** Our five cities and the county had consolidated resources for cable regulation and that arrangement provided a robust level of staff resources for regulatory functions. As a result, our Commission is supported by staff members who are national leaders in the field of public interest communications and were able to take on the heavy workload in support of our position. In keeping

See **Mouse**, page 43



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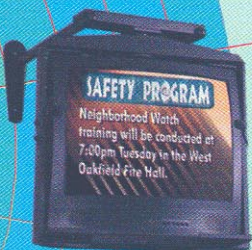
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with Oregon's tradition of public involvement, in which citizen volunteers oversee all aspects of civic life—from the state lottery, to police accountability, to beach clean-ups—the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission is entrusted with overseeing our cable franchises and the resources that result from it, including millions of dollars in annual franchise fees, a state-of-the-art institutional network (I-Net), two robust community access organizations and nearly \$1 million in annual grant funds. There has been no major recommendation from the Commission that has not been supported by the elected bodies of our jurisdictions. We recommended support for open access, knowing that the cable company would be spoiling for a fight, but confident that our elected officials would understand the important public interest issues at stake and support our stance. They did, and the rest is history.

In its front-page coverage of the Commission's action in support of open access, the *Wall Street Journal* called us "The Mouse That Roared."

*Sue Dicile is the principal of a small consulting firm in Portland, Oregon with over 20 years of experience in public involvement, community needs assessment, organization development, and planning. An activist in the field of public interest telecommunications, she served as an Alliance for Community Media National Board member for six years and is chair of the Mt. Hood Cable Regulatory Commission.*

# K&n-"sä-l&-'dA-sh&n

BY DIRK KONING AND AMY GOODMAN

**N**o doubt you've been reading article after article sounding a clarion call against corporate media consolidation, for good reasons. But, as we choke on the alphabet soup of acronyms of nonprofits fighting the good fight for media democracy, access, reform and justice, we can't help but wonder if we shouldn't look *at* consolidating. Take a gander at Webster's definition (note example) of the word:

*con-sol-i-da-tion*

Function: noun

Date: fifteenth century

1 : the act or process of consolidating : the state of being consolidated

2 : the process of uniting : the quality or state of being united; specifically : the unification of two or more corporations by dissolution of existing ones and creation of a single new corporation

The process of uniting. The quality or state of being united. This part sounds pretty good. Let's just dream out loud for a minute. Assume the groups listed in the sidebar on the right consolidated, that's right, united. This coalition would boast a vast membership, carry phenomenal clout in Congress, generate millions in grants from diverse foundations, generate millions in donations from thousands of people, throw the most awesome national and regional conventions you've ever seen, draw big talent to events, influence vendors for product design and distribution, publish a meta website to write home about, create print, video and multimedia educational and promotion materials to rival the AARP and NRA, save thousands in staff and rental costs...etc, etc, etc.

Pipe dream you say. Maybe not. Maybe we dream the dream a little and then wake up to the art of the possible. Let's say these groups united in the most logical of areas first. How about a united public policy presence? A platform could be drafted that most of these groups could unite around. With the possibility of a Bush Administration through 2008, you can bet your WMDs that a rewrite of the 1996 Telecommunication Act will occur during those dark days. What better force to stand up to a Bush FCC and Republican House and Senate than a united front of

media activists speaking with one voice and mobilizing thousands of constituents and millions of citizens?

Another logical place to unite is at national conferences. Let's look to 2007 for the first united conference. Yes, we could have tracks and sessions dedicated to each specific group, but we could have tracks and sessions dedicated to the overlapping interests and logical areas for further consolidation. Just the act of pulling off a joint conference would force a certain amount of consolidation (that may make or break the whole idea!).

Another idea that has been knocked about by many folks from these groups is a planning summit. Secure some planning dollars to explore natural areas of consolidation and unite key leaders from these groups in a weekend retreat with professional facilitation to not only meet each other and socialize, but pick the low hanging fruit and develop some concrete steps toward logical consolidation. It would be great to survey members of each group and other stakeholders to see what the general sentiment toward consolidation is. Our guess is the main concerns would be consistent across each group and we also would bet that—assuming those concerns are addressed—that most members 'in the streets' would endorse further consolidation for the benefits accrued.

Our challenge is great. Our enemies are formidable and growing through consolidation each moment. Our resources are stretched and finite. Our missions are similar. Our egos are large. Our budgets are small. Our desire to effect change is immense. Our resolve is unquestioned. What is holding us back from finding common ground and uniting around it? What is holding us back from burying some ego to insure survival? What is holding us back from tossing the acronyms into a stew to create a more fortified and ultimately nutritious mix for all?

Consolidation—let's give it a whirl.

*Dirk Koning is executive director of the Community Media Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Contact him at [dirk@grcmc.org](mailto:dirk@grcmc.org). Amy Goodman is a long-time media activist and journalist. She currently hosts the daily news show DEMOCRACY NOW! and has a book coming out this spring titled THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULERS.*

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## web centric head end control for access stations



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*enter* show record into home-brewed database.

*copy* show information into spreadsheet, create schedule.

*print* schedule for newspaper.

*re-key* schedule into on-air cg.

*re-key* schedule into station's website.

*figure* out what shows play back in what decks.

*enter* information into event controller software.

*fix* errors in on-air cg schedule.

*forget* to correct errors on website and newspaper.

*go home.*

*learn to accept* tedious task of head end management as a necessary but unpleasant part of the job of running a PEG station.



# this into this



*enter* shows from home using a web-centric interface tied to your head end.

*create* schedule without worrying about special commands or what device it will be loaded in.

*print* schedule for newspaper right from web browser.

*smile* as cg *automatically* pulls programming information from scheduling system

*recall* a darker age when website needed to be updated manually.

*marvel* as DVD changer, video server and decks are loaded by a volunteer from a device assignment list that was generated *automatically*.

*feel* tingle on back of your neck as head end is *automatically* programmed. *perfectly. every time.*

*you are home.*

*get use to* doing more with your time.

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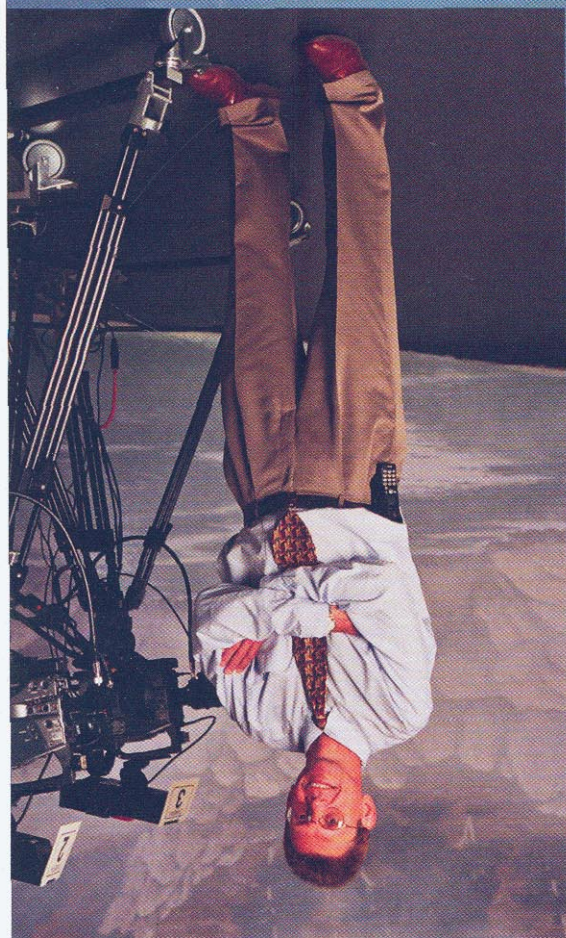
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